



PENGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 4

The Body in the Library

Agatha Christie



Verence
Carol G

3 "A"

The Body in the Library

Agatha Christie

Level 4

Retold by Anne Collins

Series Editors: Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter

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1.1 What's the book about?

Look at the title of the book, the writer's name and the picture on the front cover. Discuss these questions.

- 1 What kind of story do you think this is? Tick (✓) one or more boxes.

☐ adventure

☐ romantic

☐ science fiction

☐ crime

☐ spy

☐ historical

☐ mystery

- 2 Have you read other books by Agatha Christie, or seen films of her stories? Who were the main characters? What happened in the stories?

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the pictures in the first two chapters. Then look at the pictures below. These people all live in the English village of St Mary Mead.



Miss Marple



Colonel Bantry



Constable Palk



Basil Blake

- 1 Which of them, do you think,
 - a owns a big house?
 - b enjoys bird-watching and gardening?
 - c has a lot of noisy parties?
 - d has a job as a village policeman?
- 2 One of them is a clever detective. Can you guess which one?
- 3 Find Miss Marple's home on the map opposite. What is the name of Colonel Bantry's home, do you think?

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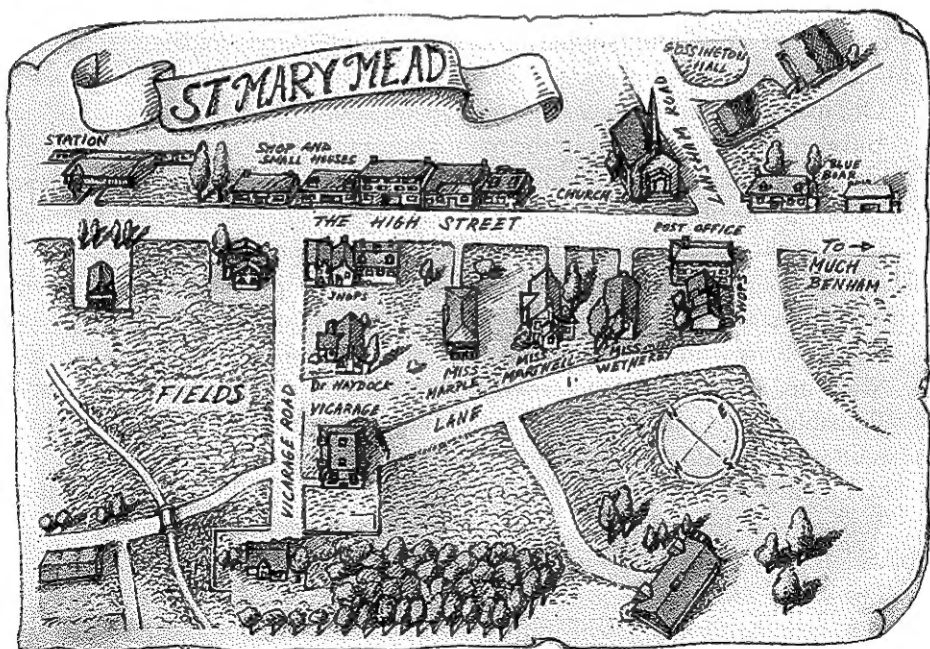
A Shocking Discovery

*'Bodies are always being found in libraries in books.
I've never known it to happen in real life.'*

The village of St* Mary Mead lies in the south-east of England, about twenty-five miles from London, twelve miles from the coast and two miles north of the town of Much Benham. It is a small English country village with a main street and shops, a post office, a railway station, and a pub called the Blue Boar. There is a church and a **Vicarage**, and a number of **cottages**.

There doesn't seem to be anything unusual about St Mary Mead. You would say it is the kind of place where nothing ever happens. Everyone knows everyone else, and they all love to talk about what their neighbours are doing.

Yes, St Mary Mead seems to be a quiet little English village, just like many English villages. But sometimes unusual things happen there – surprising and even shocking things. For example, the terrible events which happened one autumn evening in the library at Gossington Hall.



* St: Short for *Saint*

vicarage /'vɪkərɪdʒ/ (n) a place where a *vicar*, an official of the Church of England, lives
cottage /'kɒtɪdʒ/ (n) a small house in the country, especially an old one

Gossington Hall was a large house in the eastern part of St Mary Mead. It was owned by **Colonel** Arthur Bantry and his wife, Dolly.

One morning, Mrs Bantry was lying in bed. She was still half asleep and was having a pleasant dream about winning a prize at the local flower show. But although she was enjoying her dream, she could hear the noises that the servants were making downstairs as they did their work around the house.

Another day was beginning, just like so many other days at Gossington Hall. Soon Mrs Bantry's **maid**, Mary, would bring an early morning cup of tea. Every morning, Mrs Bantry heard the sound of Mary's footsteps along the **passage** outside, and the sound of the teacups. Then Mary knocked softly at the door before entering the room. She pulled back the curtains to let the light in, then put the tea down beside Colonel and Mrs Bantry's bed.

But this morning, something was wrong – very wrong. Mrs Bantry could hear footsteps coming along the passage, but they were too hurried and too soon. She listened for the sound of the teacups outside the door, but it did not come. Then there was a knock at the door.

'Come in!' called Mrs Bantry, with her eyes still closed. She knew that soon Mary would pull back the curtains as usual.

But instead of the sound of the curtains, she heard Mary's voice – frightened and upset.

'Oh, madam, oh madam, *there's a body in the library.*'

And then Mary rushed out of the room again in tears.

Mrs Bantry sat up in bed. Had Mary really come into the room and said there was a body in the library?

She thought about it for a moment, and then gave her sleeping husband a sharp push.

'Arthur, Arthur, wake up.'

Colonel Bantry turned over on his side.

'Wake up, Arthur. Did you hear what she said?'

'Probably,' said Colonel Bantry sleepily. 'I quite agree with you, Dolly.' Then he went to sleep again.

Mrs Bantry shook him.

'You've got to listen. Mary came in and said that there was a dead body in the library.'

'Eh? What?'

'*A body in the library.*'

Colonel /'kɜːnl/ (n) an officer who has or had an important position in the army

maid /meɪd/ (n) a female servant, especially in a large house

passage /'pæsɪdʒ/ (n) a long, narrow area with walls, connecting one room to another

'Who said that?'

'Mary.'

Colonel Bantry was still half asleep.

'Don't be ^{refo}silly, Dolly; you've been dreaming.'

'No, I haven't,' said Mrs Bantry. 'I thought so too, at first. But I haven't. She really came in and said that.'

'Mary came in and said there was a body in the library?'

'Yes.'

'But there can't be,' said Colonel Bantry.

'No, no, I suppose not,' said Mrs Bantry doubtfully. She paused, then continued, 'But why did Mary say there was?'

'You imagined it.'

'I didn't imagine it.'

Colonel Bantry was now fully awake. 'You've been dreaming, Dolly,' he said kindly. 'You've been reading too many detective stories. Bodies are always being found in libraries in books. I've never known it to happen in real life.'

'You've got to get up and see, Arthur,' said Mrs Bantry.

'But really, Dolly, it *was* only a dream.'

Suddenly, Mrs Bantry jumped out of bed, went to the window and pulled back the curtains. The light of a fine autumn day ^{bit}shone into the room.

'I did *not* dream it,' she said crossly. 'Get up at once, Arthur, and go downstairs. Find out what's happened.'

'You want me to go downstairs and ask if there's a body in the library? I shall look like a fool.'

'You needn't ask anything,' said Mrs Bantry. 'If there *is* a body – and perhaps Mary's gone mad – someone will tell you. You won't have to say anything.'

Still complaining, Colonel Bantry got out of bed and left the room. He went along the passage and down the stairs. At the foot of the stairs was a small group of servants; some of them were crying.

The **butler** stepped forward.

'I'm glad you have come, sir,' he said to Colonel Bantry. 'Shall I ring the police?'

'Ring them about what?' asked the Colonel.

The butler looked at the tall young woman who was crying on the cook's shoulder.

'I thought, sir, that Mary had already informed you. She said she had.'

'I was so upset, I don't know what I said,' said Mary, crying noisily. 'Finding it like that – oh, oh, oh!'

'Mary is, naturally, upset because she made the terrible discovery,' explained the butler. 'She went into the library as usual to open the curtains, and almost fell over the body.'

'Do you mean that there's a dead body in the library – *my* library?' asked the Colonel.

The butler coughed.

'Perhaps, sir, you would like to see for yourself.'



Between nine o'clock and nine-thirty in the morning was the time when people in St Mary Mead usually telephoned their neighbours. Plans were made for the day; invitations were given. So Miss Jane Marple was very surprised when her telephone rang at quarter to eight.

'I wonder who that can be?' she said to herself. 'It must be a wrong number.'

But when she picked up the phone, she was even more surprised to hear her friend Dolly Bantry's voice.

'Is that you, Jane?'

'Yes, it's Jane. You're up very early, Dolly.'

'The most ^{terrible} awful thing has happened,' said Mrs Bantry ^{in a whisper} breathlessly. 'We've just found a body in the library.'

For a moment, Miss Marple thought that her friend had gone mad.

'You've found a *what*?'

'I know,' said Mrs Bantry. 'It's hard to believe, isn't it? You think things like this only happen in books.'

'But whose body is it?' asked Miss Marple.



'It's a **blonde**.'

'A what?'

'A blonde. A beautiful blonde woman – like in books again. None of us have ever seen her before. She's just lying there in the library, dead. That's why you've got to come up to the Hall at once.'

'You want *me* to come up?'

'Yes, I'm sending the car down for you.'

'Of course, dear,' said Miss Marple doubtfully. 'If you think I can be of any help to you ...'

'You're so good at bodies. She's been murdered, you see – **strangled**. If one has to have a murder in one's house, one must at least try and enjoy it. It really is rather exciting, isn't it? That's why I want you to come and find out who did it, and solve this mystery. The strange thing is, this girl doesn't look real at all. When you've seen her, you'll understand what I mean.'

'Of course I'll come, my dear, if I can be of any *help* to you.'

Miss Jane Marple was a woman of between sixty and seventy who lived in a cottage close to the Vicarage. She had lived in St Mary Mead for many years and had many friends there, including Colonel and Mrs Bantry. She had never married, and most of the time she lived the life of an ordinary old lady, with ordinary hobbies like bird-watching and gardening.

But Miss Marple had another hobby too – a very surprising one. She solved murders.

Miss Marple's sharp eyes and sharp mind gave her an excellent understanding of human nature, which allowed her to judge people and situations very well. Sometimes there were crimes which the police could not solve, and Miss Marple was often able to help them.

When she arrived at Gossington Hall, Colonel Bantry came out on the steps, and looked a little surprised.

'Miss Marple? – er – very pleased to see you.'

'Your wife telephoned me,' explained Miss Marple.

'Excellent, excellent. She ought to have a friend with her. She's very upset.' At that moment, Mrs Bantry appeared.

'Go back into the dining-room and finish your breakfast, Arthur,' she said. 'Your eggs will get cold.'

'I thought it might be the **Inspector** arriving,' explained Colonel Bantry.

blonde /blɒnd/ (n/adj) a woman who has fair or yellow hair

strangle /'stræŋɡəl/ (v) to kill someone by squeezing their throat so they cannot breathe; this is *strangulation*

Inspector /ɪn'spektə/ (n) a British police officer with a position that is higher than a constable's

After he had seen the body, Colonel Bantury had telephoned the village policeman, **Constable** Palk. Constable Palk had telephoned his boss, Inspector Slack, who was now on his way to Gossington Hall. Constable Palk himself had already arrived, and was keeping guard outside the library door until Inspector Slack arrived.

'The Inspector will be here soon,' said Mrs Bantury. 'That's why it's important to eat your breakfast first. You need it. Go on, Arthur.'

Colonel Bantury went quietly back into the dining-room.

'Follow me,' said Mrs Bantury to Miss Marple.

She led the way along the long passage to the east part of the house.

Constable Palk stepped between Mrs Bantury and the library door.

'I'm afraid nobody is allowed in, madam,' he said. 'Inspector Slack's orders.'

'Don't be silly, Palk,' said Mrs Bantury. 'You know Miss Marple very well. It's very important she should see the body. It's *my* library, isn't it?'

Constable Palk stepped to one side. The Inspector, he decided, need never know.

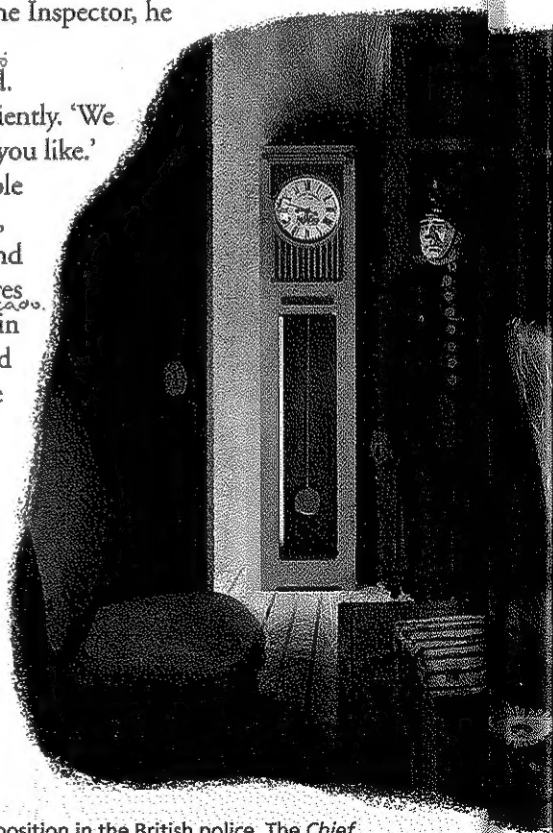
'Nothing must be touched,' he warned.

'Of course not,' said Mrs Bantury impatiently. 'We know *that*. You can come in and watch, if you like.'

Mrs Bantury, Miss Marple and Constable Palk went inside the library. It was a large, untidy room with big armchairs, books and papers spread out on the table, and pictures on the walls. A big bowl of flowers stood in the corner. It was a pleasant, old-fashioned kind of room, typical of its owners, where people could feel comfortable.

And across an old **hearthrug** in front of the fireplace lay something new and very shocking. It was the body of a girl.

Her hair was unnaturally fair, and her face was heavily made up. She was wearing a white, backless evening dress and cheap silver shoes. Her fingernails and toes were painted a deep red colour. Her figure looked very strange and out of place in Colonel Bantury's library.



Constable /'kɒnstəbəl/ (n) an officer with a low position in the British police. The **Chief Constable** is an officer in charge of the police in a large area of Britain.

hearthrug /'hɜːθrʌg/ (n) a small, thick piece of carpet that lies on the floor in front of a fireplace

nail /neɪl/ (n) one of the thin, hard parts on the end of a person's fingers and toes

'You see what I mean?' said Mrs Bantry quietly. 'It just doesn't look real.'

Miss Marple ^{nodded}. She looked down ^{thoughtfully} at the figure.

She said at last in a gentle voice, 'She's very young.'

'Yes – yes – I suppose she is.' Mrs Bantry seemed almost surprised.

Miss Marple ^{bent down}. She did not touch the girl. She looked at the fingers that were holding the front of the dress ^{tightly}, perhaps in the last fight for breath. → ^{respiration}

They heard the sound of a car outside.

'That will be the Inspector ...', Constable Palk said urgently.

But Constable Palk did not have to worry. Mrs Bantry immediately moved to the door and Miss Marple followed her.

'There won't be a problem, Palk,' said Mrs Bantry as the two ladies left.

Constable Palk allowed himself to breathe normally again.



Basil Blake's Cottage

I tell you, Melchett, I've never seen that girl before in my life!
said Colonel Bantry angrily. 'I'm not that sort of man!'

Colonel Bantry quickly finished his breakfast and hurried out into the hall. Colonel Melchett, the Chief Constable, was getting out of a car with Inspector Slack. Colonel Bantry felt very glad to see Melchett, who was an old friend, but he did not like Inspector Slack very much. Slack was hard-working, had a lot of energy, and asked people a lot of questions, but he did not care very much about their feelings.

'Good morning, Bantry,' said Melchett. 'I thought I'd better come myself. This seems a very strange business.'

'It's — it's — unbelievable!' said Colonel Bantry.

'You have no idea who the woman is?'

'No. I've never seen her before in my life.'

'Does the butler know anything?' asked Inspector Slack.

'He's just as surprised as I am.'

Another car arrived and a big man got out. The village doctor, Doctor Haydock, also worked for the police. A second police car arrived and two policemen got out. One of them had a camera.

'Right,' said Colonel Melchett. 'The body's in the library, Slack tells me. I hope your wife isn't too upset by all this?'



'She's been wonderful – really wonderful. She's got old Miss Marple up here with her – from the village, you know.'

'Miss Marple?' said Colonel Melchett. 'Why did she send for her?'

'Oh, sometimes a woman needs another woman with her, don't you think?'

'I think your wife wants to try some detective work,' said Colonel Melchett. 'Miss Marple's had great success as a local detective. She's already solved a crime that the police couldn't solve, hasn't she, Slack?'

Inspector Slack said, 'That was different.'

'Different from what?'

'That was a local crime. It's true that Miss Marple knows everything that happens in the village. But this crime will be too difficult for her.'

'You don't know very much about it yourself yet, Slack,' said Melchett.

'Ah, you wait, sir. It won't take me very long,' said Inspector Slack.

Mrs Bantry and Miss Marple were having breakfast in the dining-room and discussing the young girl in the library.

'Did the body remind you of anything, Jane?' asked Mrs Bantry.

Miss Marple was famous for making connections between small village events and more serious problems.

'Well,' said Miss Marple, 'she reminded me a little of Mrs Chetty's youngest daughter, Edie. But that's only because this poor dead girl bit her nails, and her front teeth stuck out. And Edie was fond of cheap evening dresses too. This girl's dress was made of a very poor quality material.'

'But what was she doing in Arthur's study?' asked Mrs Bantry. 'Someone had forced the window open, Palk tells me. Perhaps the girl came here with a burglar and they had an argument. But that seems silly, doesn't it?'

'She wasn't dressed for burglary,' Miss Marple said thoughtfully.

'No, she was dressed for dancing – or a party. But there are no parties here in the village – or anywhere near.'

'Well,' said Miss Marple doubtfully, 'I was just wondering –'

'Yes?'

'Basil Blake.'

'Oh no!' cried Mrs Bantry. 'I know his mother, Selina. She's a very nice woman. And she has a beautiful garden.'

The two women looked at each other. Miss Marple shook her head.

'I understand how you feel,' said Miss Marple. 'But there has been a lot of talk about Basil.'

'Oh, I know – I know. And Arthur gets very angry when anyone says his name. He was very rude to Arthur once. But, Jane, you don't think he –'

'No, no, dear. I didn't mean that at all,' said Miss Marple. 'I was just wondering what the young woman was doing in St Mary Mead. It seems such an unlikely place for her. And then I remembered Basil. Basil does have parties. He works in films and people come down from London and from the film studios — you remember last July? There was a lot of shouting and singing, and everyone got very drunk. And then — I expect you've heard — for the past few weekends he's brought down a young woman with him — a blonde.'

'You don't think that's *her*?' asked Mrs Bantry.

'Well, I wondered. But I've never seen her very close. Only once in the cottage garden when she was sunbathing. I never really saw her *face*. And all these girls with their make-up and their hair and their nails look the same.'

'Yes. But it *might* be the same girl,' agreed Mrs Bantry.

Colonel Melchett had gone to see the body. Later, he and Colonel Bantry were talking in Colonel Bantry's study at the other end of the house.

'Listen, Bantry,' said Colonel Melchett. 'Do you really not know who this girl is? You're a married man, and you're fond of your wife. But if you've had a relationship with this girl, it's better to say so now. It's a murder case. I'm not suggesting that you strangled the girl. But perhaps she came to the house, hoping to see you. Perhaps another man followed her here and murdered her.'

'I tell you, Melchett, I've never seen that girl before in my life!' said Colonel Bantry angrily. 'I'm not that sort of man!'

'That's all right, then,' said Colonel Melchett. 'But what was she doing here? She's not from this area. What was she doing in your library?'

'How should I know? I didn't ask her here.'

'No, no. But she *came* here — to see you? You haven't had any strange letters recently?'

'No, I haven't.'

'What were you doing last night?'

'I went to a political meeting. At nine o'clock, in Much Benham.'

'When did you get home?'

'I left Much Benham just after ten. I had a bit of trouble with my car on the way home. I had to change one of the wheels. I got back at quarter to twelve.'

'You didn't go into the library?'

'No. I was tired. I went straight up to bed.'

'Who shuts the library at night?'

'The butler. Usually at about seven-thirty at this time of year.'

studio /'stjʊdiəʊ/ (n) a place where films are made

case /keɪs/ (n) an event, or a number of events, that police or detectives are trying to learn more about

'And your wife?'

'I don't know. She was in bed when I got home. I don't know if she sat in the library yesterday evening.'

'What about the servants? Did one of them know this girl, do you think?'

'I don't believe it,' said Colonel Bantry. 'They've all been with us for years.'

Melchett agreed.

'Yes, they don't seem to be part of this business. My guess is that the girl came down from London – perhaps with a young man.'

'London!' cried Colonel Bantry. 'That's it! Basil Blake!'

'Who's he?'

'A young man who works in the film business. My wife likes him because she was at school with his mother, but he's a lazy, useless young fool. He's bought that cottage on the Lansham Road – that awful modern building. He has parties there – noisy crowds – and he has girls down for the weekend.'

'Girls?'

'Yes, there was one last week – a blonde –'

Colonel Melchett's mouth opened wide in surprise.

'A blonde, eh?' he said thoughtfully. 'I think I'll go and have a word with this young man – what did you say his name was?'

'Blake. Basil Blake.'

'Will he be at home, do you know?'

'Let me think. What's today – Saturday? He usually gets here sometime on Saturday morning.'

'I'll see if we can find him,' said Colonel Melchett.

When people in St Mary Mead first heard that the cottage on Lansham Road had been bought by a film star, they were very excited. But after Basil Blake arrived, they soon lost interest. Although Basil Blake was good-looking, he was not a film star – not even a film actor. He had a very unimportant job at Lemville Studios, working on the background scenery for films.

The older ladies of St Mary Mead were very critical of Basil Blake. They didn't like his weekend parties or his noisy friends. But he was very popular at the Blue Bear pub. His friends spent a lot of money there.

Basil Blake's cottage had been built by a local builder. It was about quarter of a mile from St Mary Mead. The style was modern and unattractive, not like the traditional cottages in the village.

Colonel Melchett took a police car to the cottage. He walked up to the front door and knocked. It was opened at once by a young man with long black hair, wearing orange trousers and a blue shirt.



'Well, what do you want?' asked the young man rudely.

'Are you Mr Basil Blake?'

'Of course I am. Who are you?'

'I am Colonel Melchett, the Chief Constable.'

'Really!' said the young man rudely. 'How amusing!'

Colonel Melchett began to understand why Colonel Bantry did not like Basil Blake. But he did not say anything. Instead, he followed Basil Blake into the cottage.

'What do you want to speak to me about?' asked Basil Blake.

'I understand, Mr Blake, that last weekend you had a visitor – a – er – fair-haired young lady.'

Basil Blake threw back his head and laughed loudly.

'Have the old ladies in the village asked you to come here?' he said. 'Are they worried about my behaviour?'

'No,' said Melchett. 'I have come here because the body of a fair-haired young woman has been found – murdered.'

Blake stared at him in surprise. 'Where?'

'In the library at Gossington Hall.'

'At Gossington? At old Bantry's? Old Bantry! The dirty old man!' He started to laugh even more loudly. Colonel Melchett's face turned red.

'Please be careful what you say, sir,' he said sharply. 'I came to ask you if you know anything about this business.'

'You've come to ask me if my blonde is missing? Is that it? Why should – wait a minute – what's this?'

There was the sudden noise of a car stopping outside the cottage. A young woman with ^{subtle} bright red lips and blonde hair got out. She walked up to the door, threw it open and said angrily:

'Why did you leave ^{deserted} me, you rat?'

'So there you are!' replied Basil Blake. 'Why shouldn't I leave you? I took you to a party, but you got drunk and you were dancing with someone else. I told you to come with me and you refused.'

'I was enjoying myself. You said we'd go to the party and come down here afterwards. I'm not going to leave a party before I'm ready.'

'I was ready to come here, and I came. I wasn't going to wait around for you,' replied Basil Blake.

'You can't tell me what to do,' said the girl.

They stared at each other angrily. Colonel Melchett coughed and Basil Blake turned round.

'I forgot you were here. It's time for you to leave, isn't it? Let me introduce you. This is Dinah Lee. This is a police officer. And now, Colonel, you've seen that my blonde is alive and well. So you can go back to the job of finding out what happened to old Bantry's girlfriend.'

'I advise you to be polite, young man, or you'll get into trouble,' said Colonel Melchett. He walked out quickly, his face red with anger.



2.1 Were you right?

Look back at your answers to Activity 1.2 on page iv. Then decide whether these sentences are right or wrong. Correct the sentences that are wrong.

1 Colonel Bantry lives in a cottage.

.....

2 Miss Marple is good at solving crimes.

.....

3 Constable Palk is a clever detective.

.....

4 Basil Blake is a famous film star.

.....

2.2 What more did you learn?

Complete the newspaper report with the words in the box.

library blonde married strangled Colonel hearthrug crime

BODY FOUND AT GOSSINGTON HALL LOCAL VILLAGERS SHOCKED!

Last night a terrible ¹ *crime* took place in St Mary Mead. The body of a beautiful young ² *blonde* was found this morning on the ³ *library* in the ⁴ *room* at Gossington Hall. According to police, the young woman had been ⁵ *strangled*.

The police have already interviewed ⁶ *Colonel* Bantry, the owner of Gossington Hall. 'I never saw this

girl before in my life,' he said. 'I'm a happily ⁷ *marrying* man!'



2.3 Language in use

Look at the sentence in the box. Then complete the sentences below with past perfect passive verb forms.

Basil Blake's cottage
had been built by a
local builder.

- 1 People in the village heard that the cottage *had been bought*
(buy) by a film star.
- 2 The butler realised that the blonde girl in the library
..... (murder).
- 3 Mrs Bantry told Miss Marple that a body (find)
in the library at Gossington Hall.
- 4 Miss Marple noticed that the dead girl's nails
(bite).
- 5 Colonel Bantry told the police that the library
(shut) by the butler at 7.30 p.m.
- 6 Dinah Lee arrived at Basil's house alone, because she
..... (leave) at a party in London the night before.

2.4 What happens next?

Colonel Melchett wants to find out about the murdered girl. What does he want to know, do you think? Write some questions.

Questions

1. *What is her name?*

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Disappearance of a Dancer

I thought she was with a young man. I thought she'd come back. Girls of eighteen are such fools. *London*

In his office at Much Benham, Colonel Melchett was reading his officers' reports about the body in Colonel Bantry's library. Inspector Slack was with him.

'... so it all seems very clear, sir,' Inspector Slack was saying. 'Mrs Bantry sat in the library and went to bed just before ten o'clock. She turned out the lights when she left the room. The servants went to bed at half past ten and the butler at quarter to eleven. Nobody heard anything unusual.'

'What about the window that was forced open?' asked Colonel Melchett.

'That was done with an ordinary tool. It wasn't a professional job.'

'Do you think any of the servants know anything?' asked Melchett.

'No, sir,' replied Inspector Slack rather unwillingly. 'I don't think so. I suspected the butler at first, but he doesn't talk much, that's all.'

The door opened and Doctor Haydock came in.

'I've been examining the girl's body,' he said.

'Good,' said Melchett. 'Well?'

'Nothing much. The cause of death was strangulation. The belt from her dress was passed round her neck and crossed at the back. It's quite easy to do, and didn't need much strength.'

'What was the time of death?' asked Melchett.

'Between ten o'clock and midnight.'

'Is there anything else you can say about her?'

'Nothing much. She was young – about seventeen or eighteen. Quite healthy.'

The doctor nodded and left the room.

Melchett said to Inspector Slack, 'You're quite sure that nobody's ever seen her at Gossington Hall before?'

'No. I asked the servants. They don't recognise her.'

'She probably came down from London,' said Melchett thoughtfully.

'And for a reason,' said Slack. 'I think Colonel and Mrs Bantry must know something. I know they're friends of yours, sir –'

Colonel Melchett stared coldly at Slack.

'You can be sure that I'm examining every possibility,' he said. 'Every possibility. You've looked through the list of missing persons, I suppose?'

Slack nodded. He took out a piece of paper.

suspect /sə'spekt/ (v/n) to think that someone may be guilty of a crime

'Here they are. Mrs Saunders, reported missing a week ago – dark-haired, blue-eyed, thirty-six. Mrs Barnard – she's sixty-five. Pamela Reeves, sixteen, missing from her home last night. She had gone to a Girl Guides* meeting. She has dark-brown hair ...'

'Don't go on reading stupid details, Slack,' said Colonel Melchett. 'This wasn't a schoolgirl. In my opinion –'

He stopped as the telephone rang. 'Hello – yes – yes, Much Benham Police – what? Just a minute –'

He listened, and wrote quickly. Then he spoke again.

'Ruby Keene, eighteen, job as a professional dancer, 1.6 metres, blonde hair, blue eyes. She was believed to be wearing a white evening dress and silver shoes. Is that right? What? Yes, I'm sure it's her. I'll send Slack at once.'

He put the phone down and looked at Slack excitedly.

'That was the Glenshire Police. A girl has been reported missing from the Majestic Hotel in Danemouth.'

Danemouth was a large, fashionable ^{seaside} town about eighteen miles from St Mary Mead.

'The girl was a dance ^{hostess} at the Majestic Hotel,' said Melchett. 'She didn't appear for her dance last night and the manager was very angry about it. When she was still missing this morning, someone reported it. You'd better go to Danemouth at once, Slack. Report to **Superintendent** Harper and do what he tells you.'



Inspector Slack loved being busy. He drove to Danemouth as quickly as possible. He visited the police station, and then drove to the Majestic Hotel. After a short interview with the hotel manager, he was introduced to a young woman, a relative of the missing girl, Ruby Keene.

Inspector Slack then drove the young woman back to the police station at Much Benham.

'This is Josie, sir,' he said to Colonel Melchett.

Colonel Melchett stared at Slack in surprise at the informality.

'Josie is my professional name,' the young woman explained. 'My dancing partner and I call ourselves Raymond and Josie. But Josephine Turner's my real name.'

'Please sit down, Miss Turner,' said Melchett, giving her a quick professional look. She was a good-looking young woman of about thirty years old and appeared very calm and sensible. Her face was carefully made up and she wore

* Girl Guides: an organisation that teaches girls practical skills

Superintendent /,su:pəɪn'tendənt/ (n) a British police officer with an important position

a dark suit. But although she looked anxious and upset, she did not look very sad, thought Melchett.

'This is awful,' she said as she sat down. 'Do you really think it's Ruby?'

'I'm afraid we have to ask you to look at the body and tell us,' said Melchett. 'It may be rather unpleasant for you.'

'Does she — does she — look very terrible?'

'Well, I'm afraid it may be rather a shock for you.'

'Do you want me to look at her now?'

'I think that would be best. We need to be sure it's Ruby before we ask you questions.'

They drove to the building where Ruby's body was being kept. Josie went inside and came out quickly. She looked rather sick.

'It's Ruby,' she said shakily. 'Poor girl. Men are terrible, aren't they?'

'You believe the murderer was a man?'

Josie looked surprised.

'Wasn't it? Well, I mean — I naturally thought —'

'Any special man you were thinking of?'

Josie shook her head. 'No — not me. I haven't any idea. Ruby wouldn't tell me if she had a boyfriend.'

Melchett looked at her carefully. Then they went back to his office.

'Now, Miss Turner,' he said, 'I want all the information you can give me. I want to know her full name and address, her relationship to you, and everything you know about her.'



Josephine Turner nodded. Again, Melchett was sure that she did not feel very sad. She was shocked and upset, but nothing more.

'Her professional name was Ruby Keene. Her mother was my mother's cousin. I've known her all my life, but not very well. Ruby had a job dancing in south London, but it wasn't very well paid.'

Colonel Melchett nodded.

'I've been a dance and cards hostess at the Majestic in Danemouth for three years. It's a good job, well paid and pleasant to do. I look after people when they arrive, and try and get them together to play cards or dance.'

Melchett nodded again. He thought this girl would be good at her job. She seemed very pleasant, friendly and sensible.

'I also give a dance performance every evening with Raymond Starr, the professional dancer and tennis player at the hotel. But earlier this summer, I fell on the rocks and I hurt my foot. So I couldn't dance any more.'

'I didn't want the hotel to get someone else in my place. I was worried that I wouldn't be able to get my job back again. Then I thought of Ruby. I suggested to the hotel manager that I should bring her down to the Majestic. I could still work as a hostess and play cards, and Ruby could do the dancing. That way we could keep it in the family.'

'So I asked Ruby and she came about a month ago. It was a good chance for her, better than anything she'd ever done before.'

'And was she successful?' asked Colonel Melchett.

'Oh yes. She doesn't dance as well as I do, but she was quite nice-looking. She wore too much make-up, but she was only eighteen. She wasn't very intelligent. The older men liked her more than the younger ones.'

'Did she have a special friend?'

'Not in the way that you mean,' said Josie. 'But she wouldn't tell me about it if she did.'

'Will you describe to me now when you last saw your cousin?'

'Last night,' replied Josie. 'She and Raymond give two dance performances every evening – one at 10.30 and one at midnight. After the first one, I noticed Ruby dancing with one of the young men staying in the hotel. That's the last time I saw her. Just after midnight, Raymond came up to me. It was time to begin the performance and Ruby had disappeared. I was very angry. I went up with him to her room, but she wasn't there. I noticed that she'd changed her dress. She'd been dancing earlier in a pink dress, and that was lying on a chair.'

'We went downstairs and I danced with Raymond. My leg was really hurting me. Then we waited for Ruby until about two o'clock.'

Josie sounded very angry – too angry – and Melchett was a little surprised. Was there something she wasn't telling him? ^{had to say no to what she wanted.}

'And this morning, when Ruby had still not returned, you went to the police?'

'No, I didn't,' Josie said ^{at once,}

'Why not, Miss Turner?'

'I've got my job to think about. The hotel manager doesn't want the police there. I didn't think anything had happened to Ruby. I thought she was with a young man. I thought she'd ^{come} back. Girls of eighteen are such fools.'

Melchett pretended to look at his notes.

'Ah, I see. It was a Mr Jefferson who went to the police. Is he one of the guests at the hotel?'

'Yes.'

'Why did he call the police?'

Josie was looking down at her jacket. Again, Colonel Melchett had the feeling that she wasn't telling him everything.

'He's an **invalid**,' she said slowly. ^{preoccupied & depressed} 'He gets worried and upset easily.'

'Who was the young man that you saw your cousin dancing with?' asked Melchett.

'His name's Bartlett. He'd been at the hotel for about ten days.'

'Was he very friendly with Ruby?'

'Not specially. He said that after their dance, Ruby went upstairs.'

'Did Miss Keene know anybody in St Mary Mead? Did she ever talk about Gossington?'

'Gossington?' Josie looked very surprised.

'Gossington Hall.'

She shook her head.

'Gossington Hall,' said Colonel Melchett, 'is where her body was found.'

'Gossington Hall?' said Josie, staring in great surprise. 'How strange!'

'Do you know a Colonel or a Mrs Bantry?'

Josie shook her head.

'Or a Mr Basil Blake?'

'I think I've heard that name. But I don't remember anything about him.'

Inspector Slack passed a page from a notebook across to Colonel Melchett.

On it was written in pencil: *Colonel Bantry had dinner at the Majestic Hotel last week.*

Melchett gave Slack ^{una mirada fría} a cold stare. Slack seemed to be suggesting that he was protecting his friend. He turned to Josie. ^{volvió}

'Miss Turner, I would like you to come with me to Gossington Hall.'

invalid /'invalid/ (n) someone who needs to be looked after as a result of illness, old age or an accident

The old ladies of St Mary Mead were having an exciting morning, talking about the body in the library at Gossington Hall. They were especially enjoying the shocking news about Colonel Bantry and the young, dead blonde girl.

'Isn't it *terrible*?' they said to each other. 'His poor *wife*.' *Julia*

'His wife thought too much about her garden and not enough about her husband,' said Miss Marple's neighbour, Miss Hartnell. 'You've got to keep an eye on a man – all the time – all the time. Whose body was it?'

'You know that awful woman who comes down here with Basil Blake?' said Miss Hartnell's friend, Miss Wetherby.

'That blonde? The one who lies *in* the garden with almost *no* clothes on?'

'Yes, my dear. There she was – on the hearthrug – *strangled*!'

'At Gossington? So she was Colonel Bantry's girlfriend *too* – ? What a bad woman. And Colonel Bantry – such a nice, quiet man –' said Miss Hartnell.

'Those quiet ones are often the worst,' Miss Wetherby replied. 'Jane Marple always says so.'



A Very Nice Woman

'It's a terrible thing, isn't it?' he said. 'The kind of thing one reads about in the Sunday newspapers – but one doesn't feel it really happens.'

Miss Marple and Mrs Bantry were in the living-room at Gossington Hall. 'I'm glad they've taken the body away,' said Mrs Bantry. 'It's not nice to have a body in your house.'

Just then the telephone rang. Mrs Bantry went to answer it. When she returned, she was smiling.

'That was Colonel Melchett. He's bringing the poor girl's cousin here. Perhaps he wants her to see the place where it happened.'

'I think – perhaps – he wants her to meet Colonel Bantry,' said Miss Marple.

'To see if she recognises him? I suppose – oh, yes, the police probably suspect Arthur.'

'I'm afraid so,' said Miss Marple.

'But Arthur would never kill anyone,' said Mrs Bantry.

Miss Marple was silent. Then she smiled.

'You mustn't worry, Dolly,' she said.

'No, I'm trying not to. But I do worry a little. Arthur does too. It's upset him. All those policemen looking around.'

The Chief Constable's car arrived outside. Colonel Melchett came in with a well-dressed young woman.

'This is Miss Turner, Mrs Bantry. The cousin of the – er – dead girl.'

Mrs Bantry shook Josie's hand. Then she introduced Miss Marple.

'Would you like to see where – where it happened?' she asked Josie. She led the way to the library. 'She was there, on the hearthrug.'

'Oh!' said Josie. She looked shocked and surprised. 'I just can't understand it! I can't! It isn't the sort of place –'

Miss Marple nodded her head slowly.

'That,' she said quietly, 'is what makes it so very interesting.'

Colonel Bantry came in. Melchett greeted him, and watched Josie as he introduced her to Colonel Bantry. But there was no sign of recognition in her face and Colonel Melchett felt very pleased. So Slack had been wrong. Colonel Bantry had not met Josie before.

Mrs Bantry was asking Josie about Ruby Keene's disappearance.

'I was more angry than worried,' said Josie. 'You see, I didn't know that anything had happened to her.'

'But you went to the police,' said Miss Marple.



'Oh, but *I* didn't,' said Josie. 'That was Mr Jefferson. He's an invalid.'

'Not *Conway* Jefferson?' said Mrs Bantry. 'But I know him well. Arthur, listen – Conway Jefferson. He's staying at the Majestic, and he went to the police. Isn't that strange!' She turned to Josie. 'How – how is he these days?'

'I think he's wonderful, really – quite wonderful. He's always cheerful – always joking.'

'Are the family there with him?'

'Mr Gaskell, you mean? And young Mrs Jefferson? And Peter? Oh, yes.'

'When she spoke of the Jeffersons, there was something not quite natural in Josephine Turner's voice.'

Mrs Bantry said, 'They're very nice, aren't they? The young ones, I mean.'

Josie said rather uncertainly, 'Oh yes – yes, they are, *really*.'

Later, when Colonel Melchett and Josie had gone, Mrs Bantry turned again to Miss Marple.

'What did Josie Turner mean by that? "They are, *really*."'

'Yes,' said Miss Marple. 'She changed at once when we talked about the Jeffersons. There's something that is worrying that young woman. And she said that she was *angry* about the girl being missing. I think that's very interesting. I don't think she liked the girl very much. She's not sorry about her death. But the

thought of the girl, Ruby Keene, makes her *angry*. And the interesting point is – *why?*

‘We’ll find out!’ said Mrs Bantry. ‘We’ll go to Danemouth and stay at the Majestic – yes, Jane, you too. You’ll meet Conway Jefferson. His is a very sad story. He had a son and daughter, who he loved very much. They were both married, but they spent a lot of time at home. He loved his wife very much too. But they were all killed in a plane crash several years ago. Conway Jefferson was in the accident too, and his legs were very badly hurt. But he’s a brave man. Now he can only get around in a wheelchair, but he never complains.’

‘His daughter-**in-law** lives with him. She had a son by her first marriage – Peter Carmody. They both live with Conway. And his son-in-law – his daughter’s husband – Mark Gaskell, is there most of the time too.’

‘And now another terrible thing has happened,’ said Miss Marple.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Bantry. ‘But it’s nothing to do with Conway Jefferson.’

‘Isn’t it?’ said Miss Marple. ‘It was Mr Jefferson who went to the police.’

‘That’s right ... You know, Jane, that *is* strange.’



Colonel Melchett was interviewing the manager of the Majestic Hotel, Mr Prescott. Superintendent Harper of the Glenshire Police was with him.

‘What exactly do you know about Ruby Keene?’ asked Colonel Melchett.

‘I know nothing of her – nothing at all. Josie brought her here after she fell on the rocks and hurt her foot.’

‘But Ruby was good at her job?’

‘Oh, yes. She was very young, of course – rather cheap in style, perhaps, for a place of this kind, but she was quiet and well-behaved. She danced well and people liked her,’ replied Mr Prescott.

‘Were there many young men who were interested in her?’

‘I never saw anyone special. She amused the older people.’

‘Mr Jefferson, for example?’ asked Superintendent Harper.

‘Yes. She used to sit with him and his family a lot. He used to take her out for drives sometimes. Mr Jefferson’s very fond of young people and very good to them. He’s an invalid; he can’t move around – only where his wheelchair will take him. But he likes seeing young people enjoying themselves.’

‘And he was interested in Ruby Keene?’ asked Melchett.

‘Her talk amused him, I think,’ said Mr Prescott.

‘Did his family like her too?’

‘They were always very pleasant to her.’

‘And Mr Jefferson reported that Ruby Keene was missing to the police?’

'Yes. He came to my office, very worried about her. She hadn't slept in her room. She hadn't appeared for her dance performance last night. He wanted to tell the police at once. So he rang up the police station.'

'He didn't ask Miss Turner?'

'Josie didn't like it much. I could see that. She was very annoyed about the whole thing – annoyed with Ruby, I mean. But what could she say?'

'I think,' said Melchett to Superintendent Harper, 'we'd better see Mr Jefferson. Don't you think so, Harper?'

Mr Prescott took them up to Conway Jefferson's room. It was a very big, comfortable room on the first floor, looking out over the sea.

'Is Mr Jefferson rich?' asked Colonel Melchett carelessly.

'Very rich,' replied Mr Prescott. 'He has the best rooms and the most expensive food and wine – the best of everything.'

Mr Prescott knocked on the door and a woman's voice said, 'Come in.'

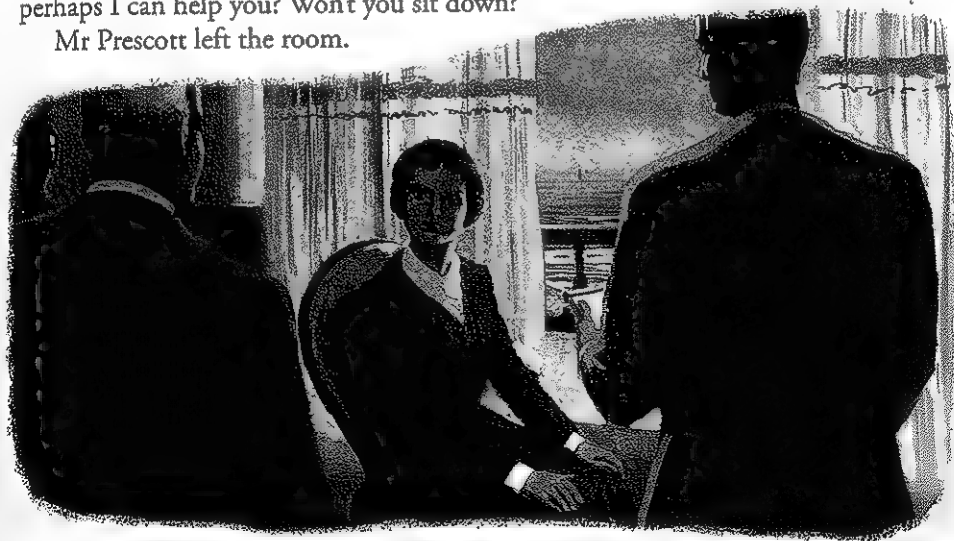
They entered the room. A woman was sitting by the window.

'I'm so sorry to interrupt you, Mrs Jefferson,' said Mr Prescott, 'but these gentlemen are from the police.'

The woman nodded her head. At first, thought Colonel Melchett, Adelaide Jefferson looked quite unattractive. But when she smiled a little and spoke, he changed his opinion. She had a lovely voice and beautiful clear brown eyes. She was, he thought, about thirty-five years old.

'Mr Jefferson is asleep,' she said. 'He is not strong, and this business has been a terrible shock to him. He's terribly upset. He was very fond of Ruby. But perhaps I can help you? Won't you sit down?'

Mr Prescott left the room.



'It was Mr Jefferson, I believe, who reported Ruby's disappearance to the police?' Colonel Melchett said.

Mrs Jefferson looked a little annoyed.

'Yes. He's an invalid, so he gets easily upset and worried.'

'Exactly how well did you know Ruby Keene?' asked Colonel Melchett.

'It's difficult to say. My father-in-law is very fond of young people and likes to have them round him. Ruby often sat with us in the hotel and he took her out for drives in the car.'

'Will you tell us about the events of last night?' asked Colonel Melchett.

'Certainly. After dinner, Ruby came and sat with us in the sitting-room. We had arranged to play cards later, but we were waiting for Mark — that is Mark Gaskell — he married Mr Jefferson's daughter, you know. But he was writing some important letters. We were also waiting for Josie. She was going to play cards with us too. She's a very good card player. But sometimes she's busy arranging card games for other hotel guests, so she can't always play with us.'

'Do you like Josie?'

'Yes, I do. She's always cheerful, works hard and seems to enjoy her job.'

'Please go on, Mrs Jefferson.'

'Ruby sat and talked to us, then Josie came. Then Ruby went off to do her first dance with Raymond Starr — he's the dance and tennis professional. Ruby came back as Mark joined us, then she went off to dance with a young man. Mr Jefferson and I started to play cards with Josie and Mark.'

She stopped and moved her hands around helplessly.

'And that's all I know! Then at midnight, Raymond came to Josie. He was very upset and asked where Ruby was. Josie said she was probably in her bedroom. Raymond telephoned her room, but there was no answer. So Josie danced with him instead. It was very brave of her, because her foot was clearly hurting. She came back to us after the dance, and tried to calm Mr Jefferson. In the end, he went to bed, but this morning he began worrying again.'

'Thank you, Mrs Jefferson,' said Colonel Melchett. 'Do you have any idea who murdered Ruby Keene?'

'No idea at all, I'm afraid,' replied Adelaide Jefferson immediately.

'The girl never said anything? Nothing about a man she was afraid of?'

Adelaide Jefferson shook her head.

'Let's interview the young man Ruby Keene was dancing with,' suggested Superintendent Harper. 'We can come back and see Mr Jefferson later.'

Colonel Melchett agreed and the two men went out.

'Nice woman,' said Colonel Melchett as they closed the door behind them.

'A very nice lady,' said Superintendent Harper.



George Bartlett was so nervous that he couldn't speak calmly.

'It's a terrible thing, isn't it?' he said. 'The kind of thing one reads about in the Sunday newspapers – but one doesn't feel it really happens.'

'How well did you know the dead girl, Mr Bartlett?' asked Colonel Melchett.

George Bartlett looked worried.

'Oh, n-n-n-or well, s-s-sir. I danced with her and played a bit of tennis.'

'You were, I think, the last person to see her alive last night? You danced with her?'

'Yes – well, yes, I did. Earlier in the evening. It was just after her dance with the professional **fellow**. It was probably ten o'clock, eleven – I don't know.'

'Please tell us exactly what happened.'

'Well, we danced, round and round, and I talked, but Ruby didn't say very much. I don't dance very well and so, girls – well – they usually get a bit bored with me. Ruby said she had a headache and went upstairs.'

'She said nothing about meeting anyone? Or going for a drive?'

'Not to me,' said Bartlett, shaking his head.

'Did she seem anxious or worried?'

George Bartlett shook his head again. 'No, just a bit bored. Nothing more.'

'And what did you do when Ruby Keene left you, Mr Bartlett?'

George Bartlett looked at Colonel Melchett in surprise. 'Let me think – it's very difficult to remember things. I think I went outside and walked around. Then I came in and had a drink at the bar. Then I went back to the dancing room. I noticed Josie dancing again with the tennis fellow.'

'So that was about midnight,' said Colonel Melchett. 'Do you have a car, Mr Bartlett?'

'Oh, yes, I've got a car.'

'Where was it, in the hotel garage?'

'No, outside, in the car park. I thought I might go for a drive. But I didn't.'

'You didn't take Miss Keene for a drive.'

'What do you mean? I didn't. Really.'

'Thank you, Mr Bartlett, I don't think there is anything more at present. *At present,*' repeated Colonel Melchett.

They left George Bartlett looking very worried.

'Stupid young fool,' said Colonel Melchett to Harper. 'Or is he?'

3.1 Were you right?

Look back at the questions you wrote in Activity 2.4. Then complete the table with the correct information.

Name of girl	Ruby Keene
Age	
Colour of hair and eyes	
Job and place of work	
Relationship to Josephine Turner	
Time of death	

3.2 What more did you learn?

Inspector Slack has written a report about the case, but he has made a lot of mistakes. Write the report again with the correct information.

POLICE REPORT

Checked missing persons list.
Three local men missing.

- 1 Mrs Saunders, missing for one month.
- 2 Mrs Barnard - thirty-six years old
- 3 Pamela Reeves - Girl Guide, blonde hair

Drove to Danemouth. Visited the Majestic Hotel and interviewed Colonel Melchett. Met Miss Josephine Turner, sister of the murdered girl. Drove Miss Turner back to police station at Danemouth for interview.

Harold Slack (Inspector)

POLICE REPORT

Harold Slack (Inspector)

3.3 Language in use

Look at the sentence in the box. Dr Haydock told Colonel Melchett that Ruby had died between 10 p.m. and 12 a.m. What else had happened that evening? Complete the sentences with past perfect forms below.

It was time to begin the performance and Ruby **had disappeared**.

dance go arrange talk telephone sit finish be

Colonel Melchett learnt that, after dinner, Ruby ¹..... with the Jeffersons. The Jeffersons ²..... to play cards with Josie. After Ruby ³..... her dance with Raymond Starr at 10.30, she ⁴..... with George Bartlett. Then she ⁵..... upstairs. At midnight, Raymond ⁶..... to Josie. He ⁷..... upset because he could not find Ruby. He ⁸..... her room, but there was no answer.

3.4 What happens next?

- 1 Read the words under the chapter heading on page 30. Then look at the picture on page 35 and discuss these questions.

a Who are the people in the picture?

.....

b Why is George Bartlett looking upset? What is he saying, do you think?

.....



- 2 Read the words under the chapter heading on page 36. Then look at the picture on page 40.

a Who is Sir Henry talking about?

b Why do you think this person has come to the Majestic Hotel?

.....

The Missing Minoan 14

'Well — er — it probably isn't important, but I thought I ought to tell you. Actually, I can't find my car.'

Colonel Melchett and Superintendent Harper interviewed the barman at the hotel. The barman remembered that Mr Bartlett had been in the bar the evening before, but he could not say what time. Mr Bartlett had sat against the wall, looking rather sad.

As they left the bar, a small boy of about nine years old came up to them.

'Are you the detectives?' he asked excitedly. 'I'm Peter Carmody. It was my grandfather, Mr Jefferson, who rang the police about Ruby.'

'I expect you're very interested in all this,' said Harper.

'Oh, yes,' said the boy. 'Do you like detective stories? I do. I read them all. Will the murder be in the papers?'

'Oh, yes, certainly it will,' said Superintendent Harper.

'I'm going back to school next week and I'll tell my friends that I knew the murdered girl — really knew her well.'

'What did you think of her?'

'Well,' said Peter thoughtfully, 'I didn't like her much. I thought she was rather stupid. Mum and Uncle Mark didn't like her much either. Only Grandfather liked her. Grandfather wants to see you.'

'So your mother and your Uncle Mark didn't like Ruby Keene?' said Superintendent Harper in an interested voice. 'Why was that?'

'Oh, I don't know,' said Peter. 'They didn't like Grandfather being so friendly to her. I expect they're glad she's dead,' said Peter cheerfully.

The two men looked at each other. At that moment a tall, well-dressed man came up to them.

'Excuse me, gentlemen. I am Edwards. I work for Mr Jefferson. He is awake now and sent me to find you, as he is very anxious to see you.'

Colonel Melchett and Superintendent Harper went back up to Conway Jefferson's rooms. Adelaide Jefferson was there, talking to a tall man who was walking nervously around the room.

'I'm glad you've come,' he said. 'My father-in-law has been asking for you. He's awake now. But please keep him calm. His health isn't very good. It's surprising that this shock didn't kill him.'

Colonel Melchett looked at Mark Gaskell. He did not very much like what he saw. Gaskell had a hard, cold face. A man who always got what he wanted, the kind of man who women often admire.

Conway Jefferson was sitting by the window in his wheelchair in the big bedroom that looked out over the sea. He had a fine head, with red hair that was just beginning to turn grey. His face was strong and powerful, and his eyes were a very bright blue. He did not look ill at all. There were deep lines on his face, but they were the lines of suffering, not of weakness.

'I'm glad you've come,' he said, looking at them carefully. 'You're the Chief Constable? And you're Superintendent Harper? Sit down.'

'I understand, Mr Jefferson, that you were interested in the dead girl?' said Melchett.

Conway Jefferson smiled.

'Yes, everyone has probably told you that. Well, it's no secret. How much has my family said to you?'

'Very little,' answered Melchett.

'Eight years ago I lost my wife, my son and my daughter in a plane crash,' said Conway Jefferson. 'My daughter-in-law and son-in-law have been very good to me. But I've realised that they have their own lives to live.'

'You must understand that I'm a lonely man. I like young people. I enjoy them. During this last month I got very friendly with the child who was killed.'

She had such a different life from the life that I've known. But she was very hard-working and she never complained.



'I grew more and more fond of Ruby. I decided, gentlemen, to **adopt** her legally. She would become – by law – my daughter. That's why I was so worried when she disappeared.'

There was a pause. Then Superintendent Harper said, 'May I ask what your son-in-law and daughter-in-law said about that?'

'What could they say? They didn't, perhaps, like it very much. But they behaved very well – yes, very well. But, you see, neither of them needs any more money from me. When my son and daughter married, I **settled** a lot of money on both of them. So when they died in the plane crash, the money passed to Adelaide and Mark. So that made everything simpler, from a financial point of view.'

'I see, Mr Jefferson,' said Superintendent Harper.

'You don't agree?' asked Mr Jefferson. 'But you must remember that Adelaide and Mark aren't really my *family*. I know they thought I was an old fool. But I wasn't being a fool about Ruby.'

'So you were intending to settle money on Ruby Keene, but you hadn't already done so?' asked Colonel Melchett.

'The legal adoption had been started, but it hadn't been completed.'

Melchett said slowly, 'Then, if anything happened to you – ?'

'Nothing's likely to happen to me!' said Conway Jefferson quickly. 'I can't walk, but I'm not an invalid. I'm as strong as a horse! But I know – of course, more than anyone, I know – that people can die very suddenly. So I made a new **will** about ten days ago. This will stated that fifty thousand pounds should be held for Ruby Keene until she was twenty-five. When she reached twenty-five, the money would be hers.'

Superintendent Harper's eyes opened wide. Colonel Melchett looked shocked too.

'That's a very large amount of money, Mr Jefferson,' said Harper. 'And you were leaving it to a girl who you had known for only a few weeks?'

Conway Jefferson's blue eyes shone with anger.

'Must I go on repeating the same thing?' he said. 'I've no family of my own. I can leave it to anyone I like. Why not? It's *my* money. *I* made it. And don't think I was behaving badly to Mark and Adelaide. I worked hard at my business after my children died, and I became very successful. I had lost my family, but I made a lot of money.'

The lines of suffering on Jefferson's face suddenly became deeper.

adopt /ə'dɒpt/ (v) to take someone else's child into your home and legally become

settle /'setl/ (v) to give money to someone by a legal arrangement

will /wɪl/ (n) a legal document saying what you want to do with your money and property after you die

'Of course,' said Melchett quickly.

'Good,' said Jefferson. 'Now I want to ask you some questions. I want to hear more about this terrible business. All I know is that Ruby was found strangled in a house about twenty miles from here.'

'That is correct,' said Melchett. 'At Gossington Hall. Colonel Bantry's house.'

'Bantry! *Arthur Bantry*? But I know him. I know him and his wife.'

'Colonel Bantry was dining in the hotel last Tuesday,' said Harper. 'You didn't see him?'

'Tuesday? No, we went out and were back late.'

'Did Ruby Keene ever talk about the Bantrys to you?' asked Melchett.

Jefferson shook his head.

'Never. I'm sure she didn't know them. What does Bantry say about it?'

'He says he's never seen the girl before in his life.'

Jefferson nodded. 'It certainly seems unbelievable.'

'Have you any idea at all, sir, who may be responsible for this?'

'No,' said Conway Jefferson. 'I can't understand it at all.'

'There's no friend of hers – someone from her past life?'

'I'm sure there isn't. She's never had a regular boyfriend. She told me that herself. I've thought about all the men I've seen with Ruby. Guests and men she danced with. But she had no special friend of any kind.'

'But perhaps Ruby *did* have a boyfriend,' thought Superintendent Harper.

'Perhaps she had a special friend who Conway Jefferson didn't know about.' But he did not allow his thoughts to show in his face.

Colonel Melchett looked at Harper and stood up.

'Thank you, Mr Jefferson. That's all we need for the present.'

The two men went out. Conway Jefferson sat back in his chair. He looked, suddenly, a very tired man. Then after a minute, he called, 'Edwards!'

Edwards came at once from the next room. He knew Conway Jefferson in a way that no one else did. Jefferson showed other people only his strong side. But Edwards also knew when he had had enough of life.

'Yes, sir?'

'Call my friend, Sir Henry Clithering,' said Jefferson. 'He's at Melbourne Abbas. Ask him to come here today if he can. Tell him it's urgent.'



When they were outside Jefferson's door, Superintendent Harper said, 'So now we have a **motive** for the crime, sir.'

'Hmm,' said Melchett. 'Fifty thousand pounds, eh?'

'Yes, sir. People have been murdered for much less money than that.'

'Yes, but —'

'You don't think it's likely in this case?' asked Harper. 'I agree. If Mark Gaskell and Adelaide Jefferson already have enough money, it's not likely they would murder anyone.'

'Exactly. I don't like Mark Gaskell's appearance very much,' said Melchett. 'But that doesn't mean he's a murderer.'

'And from what Josie said, it's impossible,' said Harper. 'They were both playing cards from twenty to eleven until midnight. No, I think there's another possibility. I think Ruby Keene had a boyfriend. Somebody she knew before she came here. He got angry because he was losing her. So he arranged to meet her last night and killed her.'

'And how did she get to Bantry's library?' asked Melchett.

'Perhaps they were out in his car when he killed her,' replied Harper. 'They were near the gates of a big house. He had to get rid of her body. She wasn't very big and he could easily carry her. He took her to the house and forced open a window. Then he put her down on the hearthrug.'

'Oh, yes, Harper,' said Melchett, 'it's all quite possible. But first we have to find this boyfriend.'

◆
George Bartlett came towards the two men.

'Oh — er — I say — er — c-could I speak to you for a minute?'

'Well, what is it — what is it?' said Colonel Melchett impatiently.

Mr Bartlett stepped back quickly. He opened and shut his mouth nervously like a fish.

'Well — er — it probably isn't important, but I thought I ought to tell you. Actually, I can't find my car.'

'Do you mean that it's been stolen?' asked Superintendent Harper.

'Well, I'm not sure,' said George Bartlett. 'Perhaps someone has taken it for a drive.'

'When did you last see it, Mr Bartlett?'

'Well, I was trying to remember. It's difficult to remember things, isn't it?'



‘Not for a person of normal intelligence,’ said Colonel Melchett coldly. ‘I thought you said it was in the hotel car park last night.’

‘Well, I mean I *thought* it was. I mean – well, I didn’t go out and look.’

‘Let’s be quite clear,’ Colonel Melchett said, trying to be patient. ‘When was the last time you saw – actually *saw* your car? What make is it?’

‘It’s a Minoan 14. I had it before lunch yesterday. I was planning to go for a drive in the afternoon. But then I had a sleep instead. Then I thought I’d take someone for a drive after dinner. But I didn’t. So I never took the car out.’

‘But your car was still in the car park, then?’ Harper said.

‘Well, yes. I mean, I’d put it there.’

Superintendent Harper looked out of the window. There were eight Minoan 14s in the car park. It was the most popular cheap car of the year.

‘Don’t you put your car away in the garage every evening?’ he asked.

‘Not in fine weather,’ replied George Bartlett. ‘It’s too much trouble.’

Superintendent Harper looked at Colonel Melchett. ‘I’ll join you upstairs, sir. I’ll ask one of my men to take down some more details from Mr Bartlett.’

‘I just thought I would tell you it’s disappeared,’ said Mr Bartlett. ‘It might be important.’



Old Friends

'You probably won't believe me,' Sir Henry said slowly, 'but downstairs, sitting in the hotel, there is someone who is very good at solving mysteries.'

Colonel Melchett and Superintendent Harper went upstairs to Ruby Keene's room. Inspector Slack was there too.

Josephine Turner and Ruby Keene had the worst rooms in the hotel. The rooms were at the end of a dark little passage. They were small, with no view and were full of old furniture. At once, Melchett saw a small stairway leading down from the passage. The stairway went down to a passage on the ground floor. Here, there was a glass door which led on to the side **terrace** of the hotel. From this terrace you could walk down a path leading to a narrow road.

'So it would be very easy for Ruby Keene to leave the hotel without anyone seeing her,' he thought.

Inspector Slack had been asking the maids a lot of questions, but they could not give him any useful information. The local police had also searched Ruby's room, looking for fingerprints. But they only found fingerprints from Ruby, Josie and the maids. There were a couple from Raymond Starr too, but Starr had said he came up to the room with Josie, looking for Ruby for their midnight dance.

There was a desk in the corner with a pile of letters. Slack had looked through all the letters carefully, but had found nothing interesting.



terrace /'terəs, 'terɪs/ (n) a flat area next to a building, where you can sit

Across a chair in the middle of the room was the pink dance dress that Ruby had worn for her dance earlier in the evening. There was also a pair of pink shoes.

'It all seems clear,' thought Colonel Melchett. 'Ruby Keene hurried upstairs, changed her clothes and hurried out again. But where did she go?'

Melchett had told Slack that Conway Jefferson was planning to adopt Ruby.

'I think, sir, that Ruby had a boyfriend,' said Slack, 'but she didn't want Mr Jefferson to find out about him. Mr Jefferson thought that Ruby was a sweet innocent girl. He wasn't going to be happy.'

'She didn't tell her cousin, Josie, about her boyfriend either. She knew that Josie would tell her to stop seeing him. But her boyfriend came here and found out about Conway Jefferson's plans to adopt Ruby. He got angry with her and killed her.'

'I expect you're right, Slack,' said Colonel Melchett. 'So we should be able to find this man quite easily.'

'There's someone who might be able to help,' continued Slack, 'and that's the professional dance fellow, Raymond Starr. Perhaps Ruby talked to him more openly than she talked to Josie.'

There was a bathroom between Josie and Ruby's rooms. Colonel Melchett looked inside, and was very surprised by all the bottles, boxes and jars there.

'Do women really use all these things?' he said.

'Oh, yes, sir,' said Inspector Slack, who always knew everything. 'And professional dancers need more make-up than ordinary women. They need to look different every night.'

Colonel Melchett turned away and spoke to Superintendent Harper.

'Will you interview this dancing fellow?' he asked.

'I suppose so, sir,' replied Harper.

As they went downstairs, Harper asked, 'What did you think of Mr Bartlett's story, sir?'

'About his car? I think, Harper, that we should watch that young man carefully. Perhaps he *did take* Ruby Keene out in his car last night.'



Superintendent Harper went to find Raymond Starr.

Starr was a tall, good-looking man with very white teeth. He had a pleasant, friendly way of speaking and was very popular in the hotel.

'I'm afraid I can't help you very much, Superintendent,' he said. 'I knew Ruby quite well, of course. She'd been here for more than a month and we'd practised our dances together – that's all. She was quite a pleasant and rather stupid girl.'

'Do you know anything about her male friends?'



'Well, she knew a few young men in the hotel, but nobody special. You see, she was nearly always with the Jefferson family.'

'Yes, the Jefferson family.' Harper paused. 'Did you know that Mr Jefferson was planning to adopt Ruby Keene legally?'

Starr seemed very surprised.

'The clever girl! Oh, well, the worst kind of fool is an old fool.'

'So that's what you think?'

'Well – what else can I say? If the old man wanted to adopt someone, why didn't he choose someone from his own background?'

'Ruby Keene never told you about the adoption?'

'No, she didn't. I knew she was very happy about something, but I didn't know what it was.'

'And Josie? Did she know?'

'Oh, Josie probably guessed. Perhaps she planned it. Josie's very clever.'

Harper nodded. Josie had brought Ruby Keene to the hotel. She had probably been happy when Conway Jefferson became interested in Ruby. That was why she had been angry when Ruby didn't appear for her dance. She didn't want Conway Jefferson to become upset and change his mind about Ruby.

'Did Ruby ever talk about someone from her past life?' Harper asked. 'Someone who was coming to see her here?'

'No – she didn't say anything about anyone like that.'

‘Thank you, Mr Starr. Now will you just tell me in your own words exactly what happened last night?’

‘Certainly. Ruby and I did our ten-thirty dance together. At midnight she hadn’t appeared for our second dance. I was very annoyed and went to Josie about it. Josie was playing cards with the Jeffersons. She hadn’t any idea where Ruby was. I telephoned Ruby’s room, but there was no answer, so I went back to Josie. Josie said that perhaps Ruby was asleep in her room. So she left the Jeffersons and came upstairs with me.’

‘What did she say when she was alone with you?’

‘She looked very angry and said: “Silly little fool. She can’t do this sort of thing. It will spoil all her chances. Who’s she with, do you know?”’

‘I said that I hadn’t any idea. I’d last seen her dancing with young Bartlett. Then Josie said, “She wouldn’t be with *him*. What *can* she be doing? She isn’t with that film fellow, is she?”’

Harper said sharply, ‘*Film fellow?* Who was he?’

‘I don’t know his name,’ replied Raymond. ‘He’s never stayed here. He’s rather an unusual-looking fellow – he’s got black hair and looks like an actor. He has something to do with the film business, I believe – or that’s what he told Ruby. He came over here to have dinner a couple of times and danced with Ruby afterwards, but I don’t think she knew him very well. So I was surprised when Josie talked about him. I said I didn’t think he’d been in the hotel that night. Josie said: “Well, she must be out with *someone*. What am I going to say to the Jeffersons?” I said, why did it matter about the Jeffersons? And Josie said that it *did* matter.’

‘We’d got to Ruby’s room by then. She wasn’t there, of course, but her dance dress was lying across a chair. Josie looked in the cupboard and said she thought Ruby had put on her old white dress. I was quite angry that Ruby had disappeared, so Josie said she would dance with me instead. She changed her dress and we went downstairs and danced. It was brave of her, because it hurt her foot, I could see that. Afterwards she asked me to help her calm the Jeffersons down. So, of course, I did what I could.’

The Superintendent nodded.

‘Thank you, Mr Starr,’ he said.

‘Of course Josie was worried about the Jeffersons,’ he thought. ‘Fifty thousand pounds! Josie didn’t want Ruby to lose that money.’

He watched Raymond Starr moving away. Starr went down the steps, picking up a bag of tennis balls. Adelaide Jefferson joined him and they went towards the tennis courts.

‘Excuse me, sir.’

Superintendent Harper looked round in surprise. A policeman was standing beside him.

'A message has just come through for you, sir. A workman reported a fire this morning. A burnt-out car was found in a **quarry** half an hour ago. Venn's Quarry – about two miles from here. There are signs of a burnt body inside.'

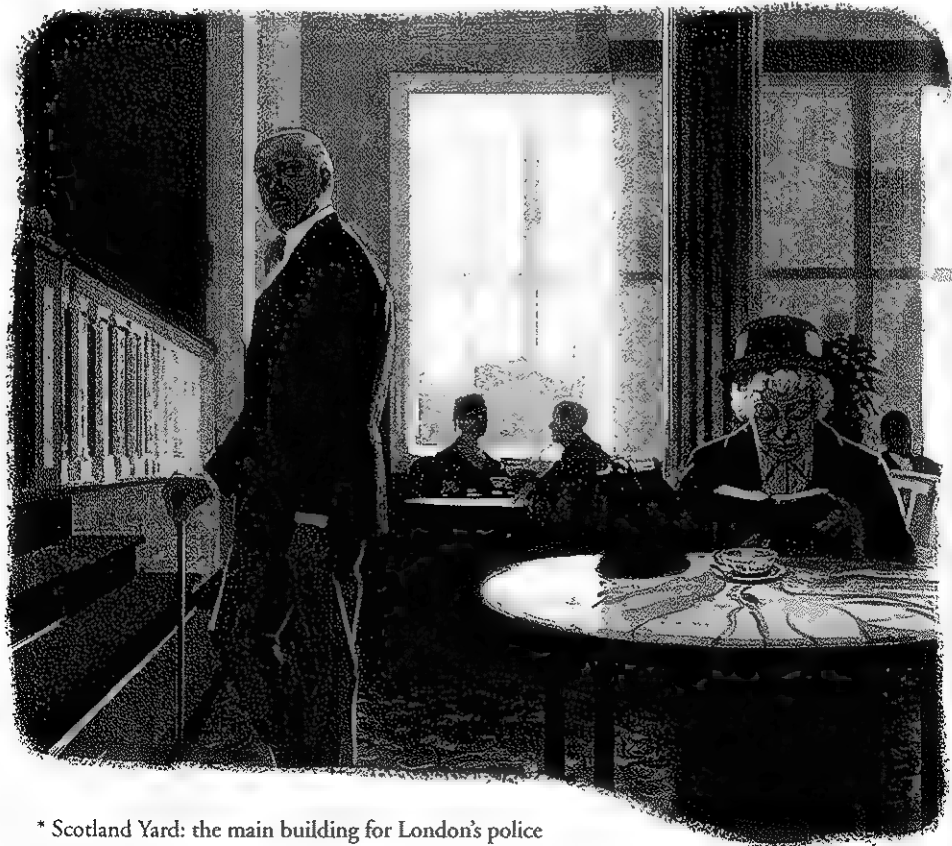
'Could they get the number of the car?' asked Harper.

'No, sir. But we'll be able to find out what kind of car it is from the number on the engine. They think it's a Minoan 14.'



Conway Jefferson had asked his old friend, Sir Henry Clithering, to come and see him at the Majestic Hotel because, before he stopped working, Sir Henry Clithering had been the head of Scotland Yard*.

As Sir Henry passed through the main living-room of the Majestic Hotel on his way up to Conway Jefferson's room, he thought he recognised someone. But



* Scotland Yard: the main building for London's police

quarry /'kwɒri/ (n) a place where stone or sand is dug out of the ground

he didn't stop. He was wondering why Conway Jefferson wanted to see him. He decided it must be something very unusual.

'I'm glad you've come,' said Jefferson. 'Sit down. You haven't heard anything yet? There's been nothing in the papers?'

Sir Henry shook his head. 'What's the matter?' he asked.

'There's been a murder. I knew the murdered girl, and the body was found in the Bantrys' house.'

'Arthur and Dolly Bantry?' asked Sir Henry Clithering in surprise.

'Yes.' Conway Jefferson told Sir Henry the facts and Sir Henry listened.

'This is a very strange business,' said Sir Henry. 'Why was she found at the Bantrys', do you think?'

'That's what worries me,' replied Jefferson. 'The Bantrys say that neither of them ever saw the girl before. Perhaps the murderer wanted to connect me to the murder and knew the Bantrys were friends of mine. That's why the body was left in their house.'

'That seems unlikely. What do you want *me* to do?' asked Sir Henry.

'I'm an invalid,' said Conway Jefferson. 'I can't go about any more, asking questions, finding things out. Do you know Melchett, the Chief Constable of this area?'

'Yes, I've met him,' said Sir Henry. Suddenly he remembered the person he had seen in the hotel living-room. A straight-backed old lady. He had met her the last time he had seen Melchett. 'But what do you want, Conway? To find out who killed this girl?'

'Just that,' replied Jefferson.

'You've no idea yourself?'

'None at all.'

'You probably won't believe me,' Sir Henry said slowly, 'but downstairs, sitting in this hotel, there is someone who is very good at solving mysteries. Someone who's better than I am. She's an old lady with a sweet face and a mind which understands the worst side of human nature. Her name's Miss Marple. She comes from the village of St Mary Mead and she's a friend of the Bantrys.'

'You're joking,' said Jefferson, staring at Sir Henry.

'No, I'm not. You spoke about Melchett just now. Last time I saw Melchett, a murder had happened in the village. Miss Marple told me who the murderer was. And she was right!'

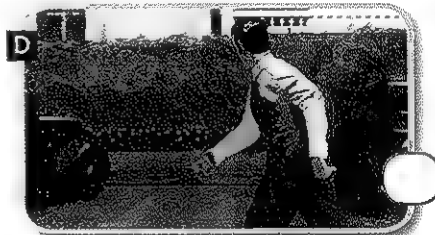
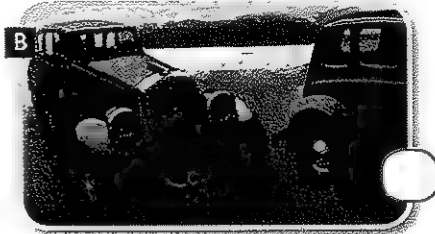
'But what is she likely to know about a girl who grew up with a background in the theatre? A girl who has probably never been in a village in her life?'

'I think,' said Sir Henry Clithering, 'that she may have a lot of good ideas.'

4.1 Were you right?

Look back at your answers to Activity 3.4.

1 Put these pictures in the right order. Write the numbers, 1–4.



2 Write the correct sentence under each picture.

- A burnt-out car is found in a quarry.
- Bartlett puts his car in the hotel car park.
- Bartlett talks to Melchett and Harper.
- Bartlett can't find his car.

4.2 What more did you learn?

Match the two parts of the sentences.

- 1 Conway Jefferson was planning
- 2 The Minoan 14
- 3 Ruby's pink dancing dress
- 4 Raymond Starr
- 5 Adelaide Jefferson
- 6 A workman telephoned the police
- 7 Sir Henry thinks he has seen

- is on a chair in her room.
- about a burnt-out car.
- is having tennis lessons.
- is a very popular car.
- to adopt Ruby Keene.
- someone he recognised.
- is very good-looking.

4.3 Language in use

Look at the sentences in the box. Then complete the sentences below with *might* or *must*.

It **might** be important.

He decided it **must** be something very unusual.

- Conway Jefferson is planning to settle fifty thousand pounds on Ruby, so he be very fond of her.
- The Minoan 14 in the quarry belong to George Bartlett.
- Mr Jefferson's health is bad, so a sudden shock kill him.
- Raymond Starr is a professional tennis player, so he be very good at tennis.
- Inspector Slack is sure that Colonel Bantry know something about the body in his library.
- Melchett is making a list of suspects. Each person on the list be Ruby's murderer.

4.4 What happens next?

Discuss these questions.

- Read the sentences under the chapter heading on page 44.
 - Who do you think is speaking?
 - Whose fingernail is this?
 - Why is the speaker so excited?
- Look at the picture on page 52.
 - Where has this shoe come from?
 - What has happened to it?
- Now look at the picture on page 53.
 - Who are the people in the picture?
 - What is Harper thinking?



The Fingernail

'See, it's a fingernail. Her fingernail! I'm going to call it Fingernail of the Murdered Woman and take it back to school.'

Sir Henry went downstairs and found Miss Marple in the sitting-room. She looked pleased to see him.

'Are you staying here?' he asked.

'Yes, we are. Mrs Bantry's here too. You've heard the news? Of course you have.'

'What's Dolly Bantry doing here? Is her husband here too?'

'No. He just shuts himself in his study when something like this happens.

Dolly, of course, is *quite* different.'

'So Dolly is almost enjoying herself?' said Sir Henry, who knew her quite well.

'And she's brought you here to help solve this mystery.'

'Well – er – yes,' said Miss Marple. 'But I don't know much about it yet.'

'I'm going to ask your advice, Miss Marple,' said Sir Henry, and he told her what had happened.

Miss Marple listened with great interest.

'Poor Mr Jefferson,' she said. 'What a sad story.'

'Yes,' said Sir Henry. 'But I can't understand why he was so interested in this girl. Perhaps she had special qualities.'

'No, I don't think so,' said Miss Marple. 'He was looking for a nice girl to take the place of his dead daughter, so he became fond of Ruby Keene. And Ruby realised that she had an opportunity to make a lot of money.'

'If Ruby Keene had a boyfriend, do you think Conway Jefferson would change his opinion of her?'

'Probably,' replied Miss Marple. 'If Ruby Keene had a young man, she would be careful to keep him a secret.'

'And perhaps the young man didn't like that?'

'I suppose that *is* the most believable solution,' said Miss Marple. 'You know, Ruby Keene's cousin – the young woman who was at Gossington Hall this morning – looked very *angry* with the dead girl. Now I understand *why*. She was probably looking forward to getting a lot of money too.'

'But why should Conway Jefferson suddenly decide to give his money to Ruby?' asked Sir Henry.

'Well,' said Miss Marple, 'it's only a suggestion, but perhaps his son-in-law and daughter-in-law wanted to get married again. Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson are both young. Perhaps they wanted to leave Conway Jefferson and get away

from their sad past. If that happened, he would be very lonely. Perhaps that's why he began to take such an interest in Ruby.'

'I see,' said Sir Henry. 'Well, I've come here to help my old friend.'

'Two old friends,' said Miss Marple.

'Two?' Sir Henry looked a little surprised.

'I suppose you meant Conway Jefferson. But I was thinking of Colonel and Mrs Bantry,' replied Miss Marple. 'You see, Sir Henry, if this crime is never solved, people will begin to talk. And that will be terrible for the Bantrys.'

'The girl's body was found at Gossington Hall, so people will say that perhaps Arthur Bantry had something to do with her murder. The Bantrys will stop getting invitations, and people won't talk to them any more. That's why, Sir Henry, we've got to find out what really happened.'

'Do you have any idea why the body was in their house?' asked Sir Henry. 'There must be a connection.'

'Oh, of course,' replied Miss Marple.

'The girl was last seen here about twenty minutes to eleven. By midnight, according to the police doctor, she was dead. Gossington's about eighteen miles from here. There's a good road, and a powerful car could drive there in less than half an hour. But why would anyone kill her here and take her body out to Gossington? Or take her out to Gossington and strangle her there?'

'I don't think it happened that way,' said Miss Marple. 'I think that a very careful plan was made. But the plan went wrong.'

Sir Henry stared at her in surprise.

'Why did the plan go wrong?'

'I think, perhaps, because people's feelings are easily hurt,' said Miss Marple. 'That doesn't sound sensible, but that's what I think.' She stopped talking. 'Here's Mrs Bantry now, with Mrs Jefferson.'

Mrs Bantry greeted Sir Henry warmly, and introduced him to Adelaide Jefferson.

'Have you seen my father-in-law?' Adelaide asked.

'Yes, I have.'

'I'm glad. We're anxious about him. It was a terrible shock.'

'Let's go out onto the terrace and have drinks and talk about it all,' said Mrs Bantry.

They went out and joined Mark Gaskell, who was sitting alone.

'We can talk about it, can't we?' asked Mrs Bantry. 'I mean, we're all old friends – except Miss Marple, and she knows all about crime. And she wants to help.'



Mark Gaskell looked at Miss Marple in surprise.

'Do you – er – write detective stories?' he asked.

'Oh, no,' said Miss Marple. 'I'm not clever enough to do *that*.'

'Now, Addie,' said Mrs Bantry impatiently, 'I want to know all about this girl. What was she really like? Did you like her?'

'Well –' Adelaide Jefferson paused and looked quickly across at Mark. 'No, of course I didn't.'

'She was interested in money,' Mark said. 'And she was very clever. She was trying to get Jeff's money.' Both Mark and Adelaide called their father-in-law Jeff.

'This young man talks too much and too openly,' thought Sir Henry.

'But couldn't you *do* something about it?' asked Mrs Bantry.

'We didn't realise what she was trying to do in time,' said Mark. He looked at Adelaide and her face turned red. 'You left the old man alone too much,' he said to her. 'You were too busy with your tennis lessons.'

'Well, I'm sorry, but I had to have some exercise,' said Adelaide. 'And I never thought –'

'No,' said Mark, 'Jeff has always been such a sensible old fellow. We wondered why he was so fond of Ruby Keene. But we were pleased for him to be kept happy and amused. We didn't think she would harm him. But then – yes, I wanted her dead ...'

'Mark,' said Addie, 'you really *must* be careful what you say.'

Mark smiled at her.

'I suppose I must, or people will think I actually *did* kill her. Oh, well, I suppose people will suspect me. Addie and I both had motives.'

'Mark,' cried Adelaide Jefferson, half laughing and half angry, 'you really *mustn't* say things like that!'

'All right, all right,' said Mark Gaskell. 'But I like saying what I think. Our dear father-in-law was planning to settle fifty thousand pounds on her.'

'What did you say when Conway told you he was planning to adopt the girl?' asked Sir Henry.

'What could we say? We had no right to be upset. It was Jeff's money. We weren't his family. He'd always been very good to us. So we couldn't do anything,' said Mark. 'But we didn't love little Ruby.'

'Jeff's always seemed so fond of Peter,' said Adelaide Jefferson.

'Of course,' said Mrs Bantrey. 'I'd forgotten that Peter was your first husband's child. I've always thought of him as Mr Jefferson's grandson.'

'So have I,' said Adelaide, so angrily that Miss Marple turned in her chair to look at her.

'It was Josie's fault,' said Mark. 'Josie brought her here.'

'Oh, but surely you don't blame Josie,' said Adelaide. 'You've always liked her so much. She didn't bring Ruby here to cause trouble. She couldn't know –'

'I know,' said Mark. 'But I'm sure she saw what was happening before we did. And she kept very quiet about it.'

'Was Ruby Keene very pretty?' Mrs Bantrey asked. 'I've seen her, of course, but –'

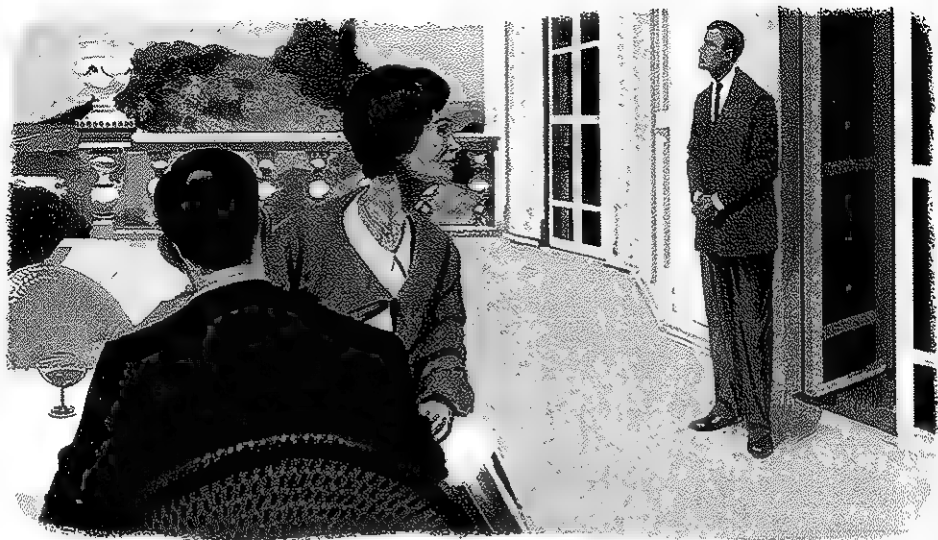
'I don't think she was really pretty at all,' said Mark thoughtfully. 'Not without any make-up. But she had nice blue eyes. She looked a little like Rosamund – my wife, you know. Perhaps that's why the old man liked her. It's a bad business. But Addie and I are glad she's dead –' Adelaide opened her mouth to speak. 'It's no good, Addie, I know what you feel. I feel the same. And I'm not going to pretend! But at the same time, I'm terribly worried about Jeff. He's very upset about it.'

He stopped and stared towards the doors leading out of the hotel living-room on to the terrace. A tall middle-aged man with a thin face was coming through them, looking around him uncertainly.

Mrs Bantrey said, 'Isn't that Hugo McLean?'

'Yes,' said Mark Gaskell. 'Addie's loyal friend. Whenever she's in trouble, she calls him and he comes at once.'

'I see,' said Miss Marple, smiling. 'Very romantic.'



'Yes,' said Mark. 'In an old-fashioned way. It's been going on for years. I suppose Addie telephoned him this morning. She didn't tell me she had.'

Edwards came along the terrace and stopped beside Mark.

'Excuse me, sir. Mr Jefferson would like you to come up.'

'I'll come at once.' Mark jumped up.

Sir Henry moved closer to Miss Marple.

'Well, what do you think of the two people who have got the most from this crime?' he asked.

Miss Marple watched Adelaide Jefferson talking to her old friend.

'I think that she loves her son very much,' she said. 'And she's the kind of woman that everyone likes. She could marry again and again.'

'And Mark Gaskell?'

'Mr Cargill, a builder in St Mary Mead, argued that people should have unnecessary work done on their houses, and then gave them high bills. He married a woman with money. I understand that Mr Gaskell did too.'

'You don't like him.'

'Yes, I do. Most women would. He's a very attractive person, I think. But he's a little unwise, I think, to *talk* as much as he does.'

'Yes,' said Sir Henry. 'He will get into trouble if he's not careful.'

A tall dark young man in white clothes came up the steps to the terrace and paused for a minute, watching Adelaide Jefferson and Hugo McLean.

'That's Raymond Starr, the tennis and dancing professional,' said Sir Henry. 'Ruby Keene's dancing partner.'

Miss Marple looked at him with interest.

'He's very nice-looking, isn't he?' she said.

'I suppose so.'

'Don't be silly, Sir Henry,' said Mrs Bantry. 'He *is* good-looking.'

'Mrs Jefferson has been having tennis lessons, I think,' said Miss Marple.

'Do you think that's important, Jane?' asked Mrs Bantry.

Miss Marple had no chance to reply to her friend's question. Young Peter Carmody came across the terrace and joined them.

'Are you a detective too?' he asked Sir Henry. 'I saw you talking to the superintendent. Somebody told me you were a very important detective from London. Do you know who did the murder yet?'

'Not yet, I'm afraid,' replied Sir Henry.

'Are you enjoying this murder very much, Peter?' asked Mrs Bantry.

'Yes, I am. I've got something. Would you like to see it?' He took a small box out of his pocket and opened it. 'See, it's a fingernail. Her fingernail! I'm going to call it *Fingernail of the Murdered Woman* and take it back to school.'



'Where did you get it?' asked Miss Marple.

'Well, it was a bit of luck, really. Because, of course, I didn't know Ruby was going to be murdered *then*. It was before dinner last night. Ruby caught a nail in Josie's dress and it came off. So Mother cut it off for her and gave it to me. She told me to put it in the wastepaper basket, but I put it in my pocket instead. This morning I remembered about it and looked to see if it was still there.'

'How horrible,' said Mrs Bantry.

'Oh, do you think so?' Peter said politely. 'Is it nearly dinner-time, do you think? I'm very hungry. Oh, there's Uncle Hugo. I didn't know that Mother had asked *him* to come down. I suppose she sent for him. She always does if she's in trouble. Here's Josie coming. Hello, Josie!'

Josephine Turner, coming along the terrace, stopped and looked rather surprised to see Mrs Bantry and Miss Marple.

'Hello, Miss Turner,' said Mrs Bantry pleasantly. 'We've come to do a bit of detective work.'

Josie looked round and lowered her voice.

'It's awful,' she said. 'Nobody knows about the murder. I mean, it isn't in the papers yet. I suppose everyone will ask me questions and it's so difficult. I don't know what I ought to say.'

'Yes, I'm afraid it will be very difficult for you,' Miss Marple agreed.

'You see, Mr Prescott said to me "Don't talk about it,"' said Josie. 'But everyone will want to know what happened. Mr Prescott said he hoped I would continue as usual – and he wasn't very nice about it, so of course I want to do my best. And I really don't see why everything should be blamed on me.'

'Do you mind if I ask you a question, Miss Turner?' asked Sir Henry. 'Has there been any unpleasantness between you and Mrs Jefferson and Mr Gaskell about this business?'

'About the murder, do you mean?' asked Josie. '

'No, I don't mean the murder.'

Josie looked uncomfortable.

'Well, there has and there hasn't, if you know what I mean,' she said rather unwillingly. 'Neither of them have *said* anything. But I think they blamed it on me – Mr Jefferson taking such an interest in Ruby, I mean. But I never thought that such a thing was going to happen. I – I was quite shocked.'

'I'm quite sure you were,' said Sir Henry kindly. 'But how did you feel when it *did* happen?'

'Well, it was a bit of good luck for Ruby, wasn't it? Everyone's got the right to have a bit of luck sometimes.'

She looked from one to the other of them and then went across the terrace into the hotel.

‘I don’t think *she* did it,’ Peter said.

‘It’s interesting, that piece of fingernail,’ said Miss Marple. ‘I had been worried, you know – about how to explain her nails.’

‘Nails?’ asked Sir Henry.

‘The dead girl’s nails were quite *short*,’ explained Mrs Bantry. ‘It *was* a little unlikely. A girl like that usually has very long nails.’

‘But of course if she broke a nail, then she might cut the others short too,’ said Miss Marple. ‘Then all her nails would all match. Did they find nail **clippings** in her room, I wonder?’

‘I’ll ask Superintendent Harper when he gets back,’ said Sir Henry.

‘Back from where?’ asked Mrs Bantry. ‘He hasn’t gone to Gossington, has he?’

‘No,’ said Sir Henry in a serious voice. ‘Something else has happened. A burnt-out car was found in a quarry –’

Miss Marple breathed in deeply.

‘Was there someone in the car?’ she asked quickly.

‘I’m afraid so – yes.’

‘I expect that will be the Girl Guide who’s missing – Pamela Reeves.’

Sir Henry stared at her in surprise.

‘Why do you think that, Miss Marple?’ he asked.

‘Well, the radio said that she was missing from her home – since last night. And her home was Daneleigh Vale; that’s not very far from here. And she was last seen at the Girl Guide meeting on Danebury Hill. That’s very close.

‘She had to pass through Danemouth to get home. So perhaps she saw or heard something about the murder – something that nobody was supposed to see or hear. Perhaps the murderer thought she was dangerous and had to be killed. Two murders like that *must* be connected, don’t you think?’

‘You think – this was a second murder?’ asked Sir Henry, lowering his voice slightly.

‘Why not?’ asked Miss Marple, looking at him calmly. ‘When someone has murdered once, they aren’t afraid to murder a second time, are they? Or sometimes even a third time.’

‘A third? You don’t think there will be a *third* murder?’ asked Sir Henry.

‘I think it’s possible ... Yes, I think it’s very possible.’

‘Miss Marple,’ said Sir Henry, ‘you frighten me. Do you know who is going to be murdered?’

‘I’ve got a very good idea,’ Miss Marple said.

The Death of a Schoolgirl

'She looks a nice girl,' thought Harper. He felt very angry. He promised himself that he would not rest until he found Pamela Reeves's murderer.

Superintendent Harper stood looking at the burnt-out car. Venn's Quarry was a lonely place far from anywhere, and the only way to get there was down a small country road. A local workman had seen the burning car on his way to work.

The Glenshire police had come with cameras, and the police doctor had come too to look at the body. He came over to talk to Harper.

'It's almost completely destroyed,' he said. 'Only part of one foot and a shoe have escaped the fire. I don't know if it's a man or a woman. But the shoe is the kind that schoolgirls wear.'

'There's a schoolgirl missing from near here,' said Harper. 'A girl of about sixteen.'

'Then it's probably her,' said the doctor. 'Poor girl.'

'She wasn't alive when — ?'

'No, no, I don't think so. There's no sign that she tried to escape. She was dead when she was put in the car. Then the car was burned so nobody would find out how she died.'

Harper went over to one of his men, who was busy examining the car. The man looked up.

'It's quite clear what happened, sir. Petrol was poured over the car and a fire was started. There are three empty petrol cans over there.'



Another policeman was carefully arranging some things that had been taken from the car. There was a burnt shoe and some small pieces of blackened material.

As Harper came close to him, the policeman said, 'Look at this, sir.'

'Is it a button from a Girl Guide's uniform?' Harper asked.

'Yes, sir.'

'Well,' said Harper, feeling rather sick. 'The body must be Pamela Reeves.'

The Reeves' family lived in a nice house with a garden. They were the kind of ordinary people who wanted the best of everything for their daughter. Not the kind of people who were used to terrible events in their lives. But now the worst possible event had happened to them.



Superintendent Harper was shown at once into the living-room. A man with a grey moustache and a woman with red, tearful eyes both jumped up.

'You have some news of Pamela?' cried Mrs Reeves.

'I'm afraid you must prepare yourselves for bad news,' said Harper.

'Has something happened – to the child?' asked Mr Reeves.

'Yes, sir.'

'Do you mean she's dead?'

'Oh no, no,' Mrs Reeves cried.

Mr Reeves put an arm round his wife.

'An accident?' he asked.

'Not exactly, Mr Reeves. She was found in a burnt-out car which had been left in a quarry.'

'In a car? In a quarry? What does this mean? Was Pamela murdered?'

'That's what it looks like, sir. That's why I'd like to ask you some questions.'

'Yes, of course. But who would want to harm a child like Pamela?'

'You've already reported to your local police that your daughter disappeared. She left here to go to a Guides meeting and you expected her home for supper. She was going to return by bus. Is that right?'

'Yes.'

'I understand that, according to the story of other Guides, when the meeting was over, Pamela said she was going into Danemouth. She wanted to go shopping there and would catch a later bus home.'

'That's right,' said Mr Reeves. 'Pamela often went into Danemouth to shop.'

'And she had no other plans that you knew about?'

'None.'

'She wasn't meeting anybody in Danemouth?'

'No, I'm sure she wasn't. We expected her back for supper. That's why, when it got so late and she hadn't appeared, we rang the police.'

'Did she have any friends that you didn't like?' asked Harper.

'No, there was never any trouble of that kind,' Mr Reeves answered.

'Pam was just a child,' said Mrs Reeves tearfully. 'She was very young for her age.'

'Do you know a Mr George Bartlett who is staying at the Majestic Hotel in Danemouth?' asked Harper.

Mr Reeves stared in surprise. 'No, we've never heard of him.'

'You don't think your daughter knew him?'

'I'm quite sure she didn't. Who is he?' Mr Reeves added sharply.

'He's the owner of the Minoan 14 car in which your daughter's body was found. He reported his car missing early today. It was in the car park of the Majestic Hotel at lunchtime yesterday.'

'But aren't you doing something?' cried Mrs Reeves. 'Aren't you trying to find the person who did this? My little girl – oh, my little girl! She wasn't burned alive, was she? Oh, Pam, Pam ...!'

'She didn't suffer, Mrs Reeves,' replied Harper. 'She was already dead when the car was burned.'

'How was she killed?' asked Mr Reeves.

'We don't know. The fire has destroyed everything,' Harper turned to Mrs Reeves. 'Believe me, Mrs Reeves, we're doing everything we can. I suggest that your husband comes with me now to attend to the official business. Please try and remember everything that Pamela said – even if it seemed unimportant. That's the best way you can help us.'

As the two men moved towards the door, Reeves pointed to a photograph.

‘There she is.’

Harper looked at it carefully. Pamela was in the centre of a group of girls.

‘A nice girl,’ thought Harper. He promised himself that he would not rest until he found Pamela Reeves’s murderer.

Colonel Melchett and Superintendent Harper were discussing the two crimes.

‘There have been two deaths,’ said Melchett. ‘Two murders. Ruby Keene and the child, Pamela Reeves. Her father said the shoe was definitely hers, and there’s the button from her Girl Guide uniform. It’s a terrible business.’

‘Yes, sir,’ said Superintendent Harper quietly.

‘We have to find out if the two murders are connected,’ said Melchett.

‘I believe they are,’ said Harper. ‘Pamela Reeves went to a meeting of the Girl Guides on Danebury Hill. Her friends said she was normal and cheerful. She told them she was going into Danemouth to shop and would catch the bus home from there later.’

‘The bus stop in Danemouth is near the Majestic Hotel. If Pamela walked down the road by the hotel, perhaps she heard or saw something about Ruby Keene. Perhaps she heard the murderer arranging to meet Ruby Keene at eleven that evening. Perhaps the murderer realised that Pamela had heard something. He had to silence her, so he killed her too.’

‘Yes,’ said Colonel Melchett. ‘Or perhaps Pamela went to meet someone in Danemouth. Someone unknown to her friends and family. Perhaps her death is quite unconnected to Ruby Keene’s death.’

‘I don’t think so, sir,’ said Harper. ‘The old lady, Miss Marple, also thought that the two deaths were connected. She’s a very clever old lady. And also, sir, there’s the car. That seems to connect her death definitely with the Majestic Hotel. It was Mr George Bartlett’s car.’

The two men looked at each other. ‘George Bartlett? What do you think about him?’ asked Melchett.

‘Ruby Keene was last seen dancing with him,’ said Harper. ‘He says she went to her room. But did she go to her room and change *to go out with him*? Had they arranged earlier to go out together – discussed it, perhaps, before dinner? Did Pamela Reeves hear them making the arrangement?’

‘He didn’t report that his car had gone until next morning,’ said Melchett. ‘And then he pretended he couldn’t remember when he had last noticed the car. But what was his motive? He had no reason for killing Ruby Keene.’

‘Yes, that’s the problem. Ruby Keene had no special boyfriend from her past life,’ said Harper. ‘Slack has checked her background very carefully. But there’s

nothing there. He also made a list of her most frequent dancing partners. He's checked them too. But they're all able to produce **alibis** for that night.

'We've checked something else,' continued Harper. 'Mr Conway Jefferson may think that Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson have a lot of money, but actually that's not true. They're both quite poor.'

'Mr Jefferson did give both his son and daughter a lot of money when they married. But Mr Jefferson's son had lost most of his share before he died, so there wasn't much left for Mrs Jefferson. And Mark Gaskell soon spent all his wife's money. He needs money – a lot of money – at the moment to pay back people he's borrowed from.'

'I didn't like Mark Gaskell very much,' said Colonel Melchett. 'He's a wild-looking kind of fellow. And he's got a motive for murdering Ruby Keene. If she were alive, Mark Gaskell would lose his half of the fifty thousand pounds. Yes, it's a motive.'

'Both Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson had a motive,' said Harper.

'I'm not thinking about Mrs Jefferson,' replied Melchett.

'No, sir, I know you're not. But actually neither of them could have done it. They both have alibis.'

'You've got a detailed statement about their movements that evening?'

'Yes, I have. Mr Gaskell had dinner with his father-in-law and Mrs Jefferson. Then he said he had to write letters. Actually, he went out for a drive in his car. He came back when Ruby Keene was dancing with Raymond. After the dance, Ruby had a drink with the Jeffersons, then went off with young Bartlett. Gaskell and the others started playing cards. That was at twenty minutes to eleven – and he didn't leave the table until after midnight. Everyone says so. And Mrs Jefferson's alibi is the same. She didn't leave the table.'

'But perhaps the girl was killed *after* midnight,' said Melchett.

'Doctor Haydock said she was killed before midnight,' said Harper. 'He's very good at police work. He doesn't make mistakes.'

'Let's ask him again,' said Melchett.

He picked up the telephone.

'Hello, Haydock, is that you? Do you remember Ruby Keene? Would it be possible for her to be killed *after* midnight?'

'I told you she was killed between ten and midnight,' said Haydock, sounding annoyed. 'She definitely wasn't killed after midnight. And she was drugged before she was strangled.'

Haydock put down the phone.

'I thought I'd found another suspect,' Harper said. 'But later I realised that I hadn't. A fellow called Basil Blake. He lives near Gossington Hall.'

'That young fool!' said Colonel Melchett angrily. He remembered Basil Blake's rudeness when he visited his cottage.

'It seems he knew Ruby Keene. He had dinner at the Majestic quite often – he danced with the girl. Do you remember what Josie said to Raymond when Ruby was discovered to be missing? "She's not with that film fellow, is she?" I've found out she meant Basil Blake. He works at the Lemville Studios.'

'Good, Harper, very good.'

'Not really, sir. Basil Blake was at a party at the studios that night. According to Inspector Slack, who's questioned him, he left the party around midnight. The young woman now at the cottage – Miss Dinah Lee – says his statement is correct. Other people at the party say the same thing.'

'Where are these studios?'

'Lemville, sir, thirty miles south-west of London.'

'Hmm – about the same distance from here?'

'Yes, sir.'

'So it wasn't him,' said Melchett. He didn't sound very pleased.

'No, sir. And we don't know that he actually thought Ruby Keene was attractive,' said Harper. He coughed. 'He seems busy with his own young lady.'

'Well,' said Melchett, 'Mark Gaskell and Adelaide Jefferson have a motive for murdering Ruby Keene, but they both have alibis. George Bartlett has no alibi – but, unfortunately, no motive either. And young Blake has an alibi, but no motive. And that's everyone. No, stop, we ought to think about that dancing fellow – Raymond Starr. He spent a lot of time with Ruby Keene.'

'But he's got an alibi too,' said Harper. 'Everyone saw him dancing from twenty to eleven until midnight. We can't make a case against him.'

'No,' said Colonel Melchett sadly. 'We can't make a case against anybody.'

5.1 Were you right?

Think back to your discussion in Activity 4.4.2 Complete this newspaper report with the words in the box.

burnt-out uniform missing button dead petrol

BODY FOUND IN CAR

A ¹ car was found this morning in Venn's Quarry, containing a ² body. Three empty ³ cans were found near the car. A burnt shoe and a ⁴ from a Girl Guide's ⁵

were also found. The shoe belonged to the ⁶ schoolgirl, Pamela Reeves.

5.2 What more did you learn?

Superintendent Harper has made some notes about five suspects. Match the correct suspects to the notes.

Adelaide Jefferson (AJ)

George Bartlett (GB)

Raymond Starr (RS)

Mark Gaskell (MG)

Basil Blake (BB)

Notes

① Facts

- a) Was the last person to dance with Ruby.
- b) Borrowed a lot of money and has to pay it back.
- c) Spent a lot of time with Ruby professionally.
- d) Was at a party on the night of Ruby's death.
- e) Not as rich as Conway Jefferson thinks.

GB

② Suspects with an alibi

- a) _____ c) _____
- b) _____ d) _____

③ Suspects without an alibi

- a) _____

④ Suspects with a motive

- a) _____ b) _____

⑤ Suspects without a motive

- a) _____ c) _____
- b) _____

53 Language in use

Look at the sentences in the box. Then complete the sentence using similar verb forms.

If Ruby Keene **had** a young man, she **would be** careful to keep him a secret.

- 1 If George Bartlett a new car, he another Minoan 14. (buy, choose)
- 2 If Raymond Starr a rich woman, he her immediately. (meet, marry)
- 3 If Josie and her foot again, she her job. (fall, hurt, lose)
- 4 Adelaide Jefferson very healthy if she tennis every day. (become, play)
- 5 The police very happy if Miss Marple the murderer. (be, find)

54 What happens next?

Read the conversation under the chapter heading on page 65.

- a Who is Mrs Bantry talking to?
- b Which of these people do *you* think could be the murderer? Complete the notes.

Name	Yes/No	Motive
George Bartlett		
Basil Blake		
Raymond Starr		
Addie Jefferson		
Mark Gaskell		
Someone else		

Living in the Past

*'If Jeff settled his money on Ruby, there would be none for Peter.
And all because of that little fool — Oh! I wanted to kill her!'*

Conway Jefferson woke up and stretched out his long powerful arms. The morning light shone softly through the curtains. He smiled. He always woke feeling happy after a night of rest. Another day!

He pressed the special bell by his hand. And suddenly he remembered.

Edwards came into the room and saw the look of suffering on Jefferson's face. He paused with his hand on the curtains.

'You're not in pain, sir?' he asked.

'No, no. Pull the curtains back.'

The clear light filled the room. Conway Jefferson lay remembering and thinking. He saw Ruby's pretty empty face before his eyes. He had thought she was an innocent child, but he wasn't sure now.

Suddenly, he felt very tired. He closed his eyes and whispered a name.

'Margaret ...'

It was the name of his dead wife.



Mrs Bantry was talking to Adelaide Jefferson on the terrace.

'I like your friend, Miss Marple,' said Adelaide.

'Yes,' said Mrs Bantry. 'She's a wonderful woman. But she has a rather low opinion of human nature.'

'Sometimes a person can think too highly of another person,' said Adelaide.

'You mean Ruby Keene?'

'Yes,' said Adelaide. 'I don't want to say awful things about her. She wasn't a bad person. She was very ordinary and rather silly. But she was definitely interested in money. And she was very good at making herself attractive to an older man who was — lonely.'

'I suppose,' said Mrs Bantry thoughtfully, 'that Conway *was* lonely?'

'He was — this summer.' Adelaide paused. 'Mark thinks it was all my fault. But I've had a very odd kind of life. My first husband, Mike Carmody, died very soon after we were married. Peter, as you know, was born after his death. Frank Jefferson was his great friend, and I became very fond of him.'

'But Frank wasn't very good with money. When we married, Mr Jefferson settled a large amount on him, but he lost it all. When Frank died, there was very little left. But I've never told his father. I didn't want him to think badly of Frank. So Mr Jefferson thinks I'm a rich woman. And, of course, Peter and

I have lived with him since then. He's paid for everything, so I've never had to worry.

'We've been like a family all these years, but he still thinks of me as Frank's wife,' she said slowly. 'Mark is Rosamund's husband and I'm Frank's wife. But suddenly – this summer – something changed for me. It's a terrible thing to say, but I didn't want to think of Frank any more!

'I wanted to be me – Addie. I'm still quite young and strong and able to play games and swim and dance. And Hugo McLean wants to marry me. I've never really thought about it before – but this summer I *did* begin to think of it.'

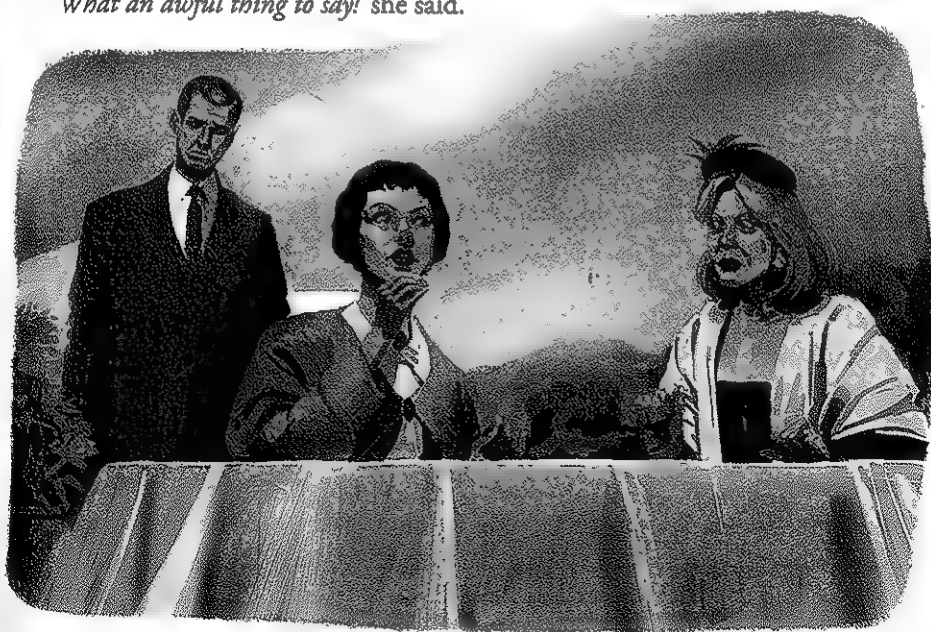
She stopped and shook her head.

'And so I suppose it's true. I stopped paying as much attention to Jeff. I saw that Ruby amused him and I was rather glad. It meant I could be freer. But I never thought that he would become so fond of Ruby. And when I found out, I was shocked and angry.

'There's Peter, you see. He needs Jeff if he is going to have a good future. Jeff is very fond of Peter, but Peter isn't his grandson. If Jeff settled his money on Ruby, there would be none for Peter. And all because of that little fool – Oh! I wanted to kill her!'

She stopped and looked at Mrs Bantry. There was shock in her beautiful brown eyes.

'*What an awful thing to say!*' she said.



Hugo McLean had come up quietly behind them.

'What's an awful thing to say?' he asked.

'Sit down, Hugo,' said Adelaide. 'You know Mrs Bantry, don't you?' ^{no to miss,}

McLean greeted Mrs Bantry. 'What was an awful thing to say?'

'I said I wanted to kill Ruby Keene,' said Adelaide.

McLean looked at her with calm grey eyes.

'*You've got to be careful, Addie,*' he said.

There was a warning in his voice.



When Miss Marple came out of the hotel and joined Mrs Bantry a few minutes later, Hugo McLean and Adelaide Jefferson were walking down to the sea together.

'He seems to be very fond of her,' said Miss Marple as she sat down.

'Oh, yes,' replied Mrs Bantry. 'He's been in love with her for years. She was telling me all about herself just now. She told me that her husband spent all Mr Jefferson's money, but they never told Mr Jefferson. And that, this summer, her feelings about her dead husband changed.'

Miss Marple nodded.

'Yes,' she said. 'I suppose she got tired of living in the past. So she stopped giving her father-in-law the same attention as before. And, like old Mr Badger when his wife became religious, he didn't like that. Then Ruby Keene arrived.'

'Do you think,' asked Mrs Bantry, 'that her cousin, Josie, brought Ruby here to introduce her to Conway Jefferson?'

Miss Marple shook her head.

'No, I don't think so,' she said. 'I don't think Josie could see what would happen. She's not that kind of person. I think it was a surprise to her.'

'Everyone seems surprised,' said Mrs Bantry. 'Addie — and Mark Gaskell too.'

'Yes,' said Miss Marple, smiling. 'He's definitely a man who's interested in women. He's not the kind of man who could live alone for ever. Yes, I'm sure that both Addie and Mark were tired of living in the past. But, of course, it's easier for men.'

At that moment, Mark was talking to Sir Henry Clithering.

'I've just realised that I'm the chief suspect,' he said. 'The police have been checking my financial situation. I don't have any money, you know. I borrowed a lot and I have to pay it back very soon. If I can't, I'll be in a lot of trouble. But if old Jeff dies in a month or two, as the doctors think, and Addie and I share his money, then everything will be fine.'



'It's very lucky for me that someone strangled that poor girl. I didn't do it. I'm not a strangler. I don't really think I could ever murder anybody. But I don't suppose I can ask the police to believe *that*.'

'You've got an alibi,' said Sir Henry. 'That's very useful.'

'Yes, but alibis can be false,' said Mark. 'No innocent person ever has an alibi!'

'It's good that you can joke about it,' said Sir Henry.

'Actually, I'm rather frightened,' said Mark cheerfully. 'Murder *is* frightening. And I'm sorry for old Jeff. But if Jeff had found out about Ruby, then things would be worse.'

'What do you mean?' asked Sir Henry.

'Where did Ruby go last night?' said Mark. 'I'm sure she went to meet a man. Jeff wouldn't like that at all. Conway Jefferson is a man who likes to be in control of his surroundings. He's very kind and generous, but he wants to control the people around him.'

Mark Gaskell paused.

'I loved my wife. I shall never feel the same for anyone else. Rosamund was sunshine, happiness and flowers. But she's been dead for a long time now. I'm a man, and I like women. I don't want to marry again – not at all. I've had to be careful, but I've had some good times. Poor Addie hasn't.'

'She's a really nice woman, the kind of woman that men want to marry. She would marry again if she could, and be very happy. But old Jeff saw her as always being Frank's wife, so she thought of herself as Frank's wife too. He doesn't know it, but we've been in prison. I escaped quietly a long time ago and Addie escaped this summer – and it gave him a shock. His world started to fall to pieces – and then Ruby Keene arrived.

'But now she's dead,' he said happily. 'Come and have a drink, Clithering.'

It wasn't surprising, thought Sir Henry, that the police suspected Mark Gaskell.

Superintendent Harper was interviewing Doctor Metcalf, one of the best-known doctors in Danemouth. The doctor was middle-aged with a quiet, pleasant voice. He listened carefully to Harper and replied to his questions about Conway Jefferson in a thoughtful, gentle way.

'So Mrs Jefferson is correct about Mr Jefferson's health?' asked Harper.

'Yes, Mr Jefferson's health is not at all good. After the accident, he wanted to live as much as possible like other men, so he's pushed himself to the limits of his strength for several years now. He has refused to rest or relax. He's like an engine that has been driven too hard.'

'So he's refused to listen to medical advice?'

'Yes.'

'But he's strong enough physically?' asked Harper.

'He has enormous strength in his arms and shoulders. He was a powerful man before his accident. He can handle his wheelchair very well, and can move about a room on sticks – from his bed to the chair, for example.'

'I see,' said Harper. 'So he's strong and fit in that sense. But his heart is in a bad condition. Could a sudden shock kill him?'

'Yes,' said Metcalf. 'A sudden shock could easily kill him.'

'But actually a shock *didn't* kill him,' said Harper slowly. 'Ruby Keene's murder was a terrible shock, but Conway Jefferson is still alive.'

'I know,' said Doctor Metcalf. 'But, in my experience, a *physical* shock is more likely to cause death than a shock to the mind – a door shutting suddenly, for example. That would be more likely to kill Mr Jefferson than the news of Ruby's death.

'It takes time for a person's mind to understand bad news. But a door shutting suddenly, or someone jumping out of a cupboard, has an immediate effect. It causes the heart to jump in shock.'

'But most people don't know that,' said Harper slowly. 'Perhaps someone thought that the shock of hearing about Ruby's death *would* kill Jefferson.'

A Loyal Servant

'I thought you would know who the murderer is at once,' said Mrs Bantry. 'No, no, dear. I didn't know at once – not for some time.'

Later, Superintendent Harper talked to Sir Henry Clithering. 'Perhaps the murderer had a very clever plan,' he said. 'First, the girl – and the shock of her death would kill Conway Jefferson too, before Jefferson could change his will.'

'Before Conway Jefferson met Ruby Keene, I know that he was planning to leave his money to Mark Gaskell and Adelaide Jefferson,' said Sir Henry. 'I don't see why he should change his mind about that. And he is fond of the boy – of young Peter.'

'Does he think of him as his grandson?' asked Harper.

'No, I don't think so,' Sir Henry said slowly.

'There's another thing I'd like to ask you, sir,' said Harper. 'You're a friend of the Jeffersons. How fond do you think Mr Jefferson really is of Mr Gaskell and young Mrs Jefferson?'

'What do you mean, Superintendent?'

'Well, sir, he's fond of them because they were married to his daughter and son,' said Harper. 'But how would he feel if one of them married again?'

'That's an interesting point,' said Sir Henry thoughtfully. 'I think his attitude towards them would change. He wouldn't be interested in them any more.'

'Do you mind if we walk along this path to the tennis court, sir?' Superintendent Harper asked. 'I see that Miss Marple's sitting there. I want to ask her to do something for me. I want to ask you to do something too.'

'What's that, Superintendent?'

'I'd like you to interview Conway Jefferson's personal servant, Edwards.'

'Edwards! What do you want from him?'

'Everything you can think of! Everything he knows and what he thinks. He's been with Conway Jefferson for a long time. He knows more than anyone else about the Jefferson family. He wouldn't tell *me* – I'm just a policeman – but he'll tell *you*. You're an old friend of Mr Jefferson.'

'All right,' said Sir Henry. 'And how do you want Miss Marple to help you?'

'With some girls. Some of those Girl Guides. The ones who were most friendly with Pamela Reeves. It's possible that they may know something. You see, I've been thinking. Pamela said she was going shopping in Danemouth. But why didn't she ask another girl to go with her? Girls usually like to shop with someone.'

'So I think it's possible that she wasn't really going shopping. I'm sure that Miss Marple is good at talking to girls. She's very clever, you know.'

The Superintendent smiled.

'I think you're right,' he said.

They talked to Miss Marple, who listened to Superintendent Harper's request and agreed at once to help.

'I think that perhaps I *could* be of some use,' she said. 'I do have a lot of experience in talking to young girls. Oh, yes, I know when a girl is hiding something.'

'There's something else,' said Sir Henry. 'You wanted to know if we found any more nail clippings in Ruby Keene's room. Superintendent Harper tells me there were some in her wastepaper basket.'

'Were there?' said Miss Marple thoughtfully. 'Then that's ...'

'Why did you want to know, Miss Marple?' asked Harper.

'It was one of the things that – well, that seemed *wrong* when I looked at the body,' said Miss Marple. 'The hands were wrong, and at first I couldn't think why. Then I realised that girls who wear a lot of make-up usually have very long fingernails. But Ruby Keene's nails were very short.'

'And then the little boy – Peter, you know – said her nails had been long, but she caught one and broke it. So I wondered if perhaps she cut the rest of her nails off too. That's why I asked Sir Henry to look for clippings in her room.'

'You said just now, "*one* of the things that seemed wrong when you looked at the body." Was there something else?' asked Sir Henry.

Miss Marple nodded.

'Oh, yes!' she said. 'There was the dress. The dress was *all* wrong!'

'But why?' asked Sir Henry.

'Well, you see, it was an old dress. People may think that Ruby Keene was going out to meet a boyfriend, but why did she wear an old dress? A girl like Ruby would wear her best dress.'

'Yes, but perhaps she was going outside,' said Sir Henry. 'Perhaps she was going in an open car. She wouldn't want to get her best dress dirty.'

'Then she would wear trousers,' said Miss Marple. 'No, I think if Ruby was going to meet a boyfriend, she would keep her best dress on – the pink one she was wearing earlier. She wouldn't change it.'

'And what's your explanation, Miss Marple?' asked Harper.

'I haven't got one – yet,' said Miss Marple. 'But I think it could be important ...'

Raymond Starr had just finished giving a lesson on the tennis court to a large middle-aged lady. As she walked back to the hotel, Raymond called goodbye.



Then he turned towards the seat where Miss Marple and Sir Henry Clithering were sitting. The smile on his face disappeared and he looked tired and worried.

'She'll never be able to play,' he said.

Then his smile appeared again on his handsome face. Sir Henry wondered how old he was. Twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five? It was impossible to say.

'Please sit down,' said Sir Henry.

Sir Henry didn't feel completely comfortable with Raymond Starr. Was it because Raymond was a good dancer? The fellow moved too well.

'Is Raymond your real name?' he asked.

'Actually, my real name is Ramon,' replied Raymond Starr. 'I had an Argentinian grandmother. But my first name is Thomas. You come from Devonshire, don't you? My people lived there. At Alsmonston.'

'Are you one of the Alsmonston Starrs?' asked Sir Henry in surprise.

The Starr family had owned a big house in Devon for hundreds of years, but had lost their money and had had to sell their home.

'Yes,' said Raymond. 'We've had to find jobs wherever we can. I'm not good at anything except dancing and playing tennis. I worked in France, then I came here. The pay isn't very good, but the work is quite pleasant. I mostly teach tennis to fat women who will never, never be able to play! And dance with the unloved daughters of rich guests. Oh, well, that's life, I suppose.'

He laughed. He suddenly looked happy and healthy and very much alive.

'I've been wanting to talk to you,' said Sir Henry.

'About Ruby Keene? I can't help you, you know. I don't know who killed her. I know very little about her. She didn't tell me much about herself.'

'Did you like her?' asked Miss Marple.

'No, but I didn't *dislike* her.' His voice sounded careless and uninterested.

'So you have no suggestions about who killed her?' asked Sir Henry.

'I'm afraid not. It seems to me there was no motive.'

'Two people had a motive,' said Miss Marple.

Sir Henry looked at her quickly.

'Really?' Raymond looked surprised.

'Mrs Jefferson and Mr Gaskell will probably get fifty thousand pounds as a result of her death,' said Sir Henry rather unwillingly.

'What?' Raymond looked shocked and upset. 'Oh, but neither of them – Mrs Jefferson – neither of them – could murder anyone.'

He shook his head, then he got up.

'Here's Mrs Jefferson now. She's late for her lesson!' He sounded amused.

Adelaide Jefferson and Hugo McLean were walking quickly down the path towards them. With a smiling 'sorry!', Adelaide went on to the court with Raymond. McLean sat down beside Sir Henry and Miss Marple, and watched the game.

'I don't know why Addie wants tennis lessons,' he said. 'Who *is* this Raymond fellow? Where do these professional tennis players come from?'

'He's one of the Devonshire Starr family,' said Sir Henry.

'What? Not really?' McLean didn't look very pleased. 'I don't know why Addie sent for me,' he said. 'She doesn't seem very upset about this business!'

'When did she send for you?' asked Sir Henry.

'Oh – er – when all this happened. She called me in London, but I'd left the afternoon before. I was staying at Danebury Head.'

'What? That's quite near here.'

'Yes. I got a message and came here at once.'

Miss Marple looked at him thoughtfully. 'I've heard that Danebury Head is very pleasant,' she said, 'and not very expensive.'

'That's right,' said McLean. 'I couldn't afford it if it was.' He got up. 'I'm going for a walk,' he said.

'Do you think he's a little dull?' Sir Henry asked Miss Marple.

'Perhaps his ideas are a little limited,' she replied. 'But I think he has interesting possibilities.'

'I have to go,' said Sir Henry. 'But here's Mrs Bantry.'

Mrs Bantry sat down breathlessly.

'I've been talking to the maids,' she said, 'but I haven't found out anything.' She looked at Adelaide and Raymond Starr on the tennis court. 'Addie's tennis is improving a lot,' she said. 'That young tennis fellow is an attractive young man. Addie's quite good-looking too. I wouldn't be surprised if she gets married again.'

'She'll be a rich woman too, when Mr Jefferson dies,' said Miss Marple.

'Oh, don't always have such a nasty mind, Jane! Why haven't you solved this mystery yet? I thought you would know who the murderer is *at once*.'

'No, no, dear. I didn't know at once – not for some time.'

Mrs Bantry looked at Miss Marple, her eyes wide with shock.

'You mean you know *now* who killed Ruby Keene?'

'Oh, yes,' said Miss Marple. 'I know *that*.'

'But Jane, who is it? Tell me at once.'

Miss Marple shook her head.

'I'm sorry, Dolly, I can't do that. You would tell everyone. But everyone has been much too *believing*. You simply can't believe everything that people tell you. I never believe anyone at all. I know human nature so well.'

Mrs Bantry was silent for a minute or two. Then she said in a different voice, 'But it happened in *my* house, Jane. It's *my* murder and I want to enjoy it.' She noticed Miss Marple looking at her. 'Don't you believe that?'

'Of course, Dolly, if you tell me so,' said Miss Marple sweetly.

'Yes, but you never believe what people tell you, do you? You've just said so,' said Mrs Bantry. 'Well, you're quite right.' Suddenly her voice changed again. 'I'm not a complete fool, Jane. I know what people are saying all over St Mary Mead. They're saying that Arthur must know something about this girl because she was found in his library. They're saying she's his girlfriend, or even his daughter. And they'll continue saying such things.'

'That's why this murder has got to be solved. Or Arthur's whole life will be ruined – and I won't let that happen. I won't!' She paused for a minute, then said, 'That's why I came to Danemouth and left him alone at home – to find out what really happened.'

'I know, dear,' said Miss Marple. 'That's why I'm here too.'

Edwards was listening to Sir Henry Clithering in a quiet hotel room.

'I'd like to ask you some questions, Edwards. But first, please understand my position here. I was at one time head of Scotland Yard. When this terrible thing happened, Mr Jefferson sent for me. He asked me to use my skill and experience to solve it.'



Sir Henry paused. Edwards was looking at him with pale, intelligent eyes.

'Of course, Sir Henry.'

'I'm sure you understand the facts of this business,' continued Sir Henry. 'The dead girl was going to become Mr Jefferson's adopted daughter. Two people had a motive for not wanting this to happen. These two people are Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson.'

'May I ask if they are suspects, sir?' asked Edwards.

'Yes, until we find out what really happened,' said Sir Henry.

'It's an unpleasant position for them, sir.'

'Very unpleasant. Now, Edwards, I need to know about the Jefferson family. How did they feel, what did they show, what things were said? I'm asking you for inside information – the kind of inside information that only you are likely to have. You know Mr Jefferson's moods very well. I'm asking you this, not as a policeman, but as a friend of Mr Jefferson's.'

'I understand you, sir,' Edward said quietly. 'You want me to speak quite openly – to say things that I would not normally say.'

'You're a very intelligent fellow, Edwards' said Sir Henry. 'That's exactly what I *do* mean.'

Edwards was silent for a minute or two, then he began to speak.

'I've been with Mr Jefferson for a number of years,' he said. 'I know him very well. I've seen him in his bad moments as well as his good ones. He's a very proud man. He looks a good-tempered gentleman. But I've seen him so angry

that he could hardly speak. And when people lied to him, it made him very angry.'

'Are you saying that for any special reason, Edwards?'

'Yes, sir, I am. In my opinion, Sir Henry, that young woman didn't care about him. Mr Jefferson thought she was an innocent young girl, but I don't think she was. Usually Mr Jefferson has very good judgement. But sometimes a gentleman can't see clearly the true character of a young woman.'

'Young Mrs Jefferson had changed a lot over the summer. He noticed it and it hurt him badly. He was fond of her. He didn't like Mr Mark very much. But Mr Mark was his daughter's husband. He always thought of him like that.'

'How would he feel if Mr Mark married someone else? Or Mrs Jefferson?'

'He wouldn't like it, sir. he wouldn't show it, but he would be very angry.'

'Do you think Ruby Keene planned to get Mr Jefferson's money?'

'Well, she was quite an inexperienced young girl, but yes.'

'What did Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson say when Mr Jefferson told them he was going to adopt Ruby Keene?'

'There was little discussion, sir. Mr Mark started to say something, but Mr Jefferson told him to be quiet. Mrs Jefferson didn't say much – she's a quiet lady – but she advised him not to do anything in a great hurry.'

'What was the girl's attitude?'

'She was very pleased, sir,' Edwards said coldly. 'Happy and excited.'

'You don't think that – er – she was in love with someone?' asked Sir Henry.

'Well,' Edwards said slowly. 'One day the young woman opened her handbag and a small photo fell out. It was a photo of a dark young man with rather untidy hair. Mr Jefferson saw it and said, "Who's this, my dear?"'

'Miss Keene pretended that she didn't know anything about it. She said, "I've no idea, Jeffie. I don't know how it got into my bag. I didn't put it there!"'

'But Mr Jefferson didn't believe her. He looked angry. "Tell me, my dear," he said. "*You* know who it is." She began to look frightened. She said, "I do recognise him now. He comes here sometimes and I've danced with him. I don't know his name. The silly fool must have put his photo in my bag."

'But I don't think Mr Jefferson believed her story. And sometimes, when she'd been out, he asked her where she'd been.'

Sir Henry nodded. He asked a few more questions, but Edwards could tell him nothing more.

6.1 Were you right?

- 1 Discuss whether either Ruby Keene or Conway Jefferson have behaved foolishly.
- 2 Decide whether these sentences are right (✓) or wrong (X).
 - a ☐ Adelaide Jefferson is a rich woman.
 - b ☐ Peter Carmody is Conway Jefferson's grandson.
 - c ☐ Hugo McLean is in love with Adelaide.
 - d ☐ Mark Gaskell wants to get married again.
 - e ☐ A sudden shock could kill Conway Jefferson.
 - f ☐ There were no nail clippings in Ruby's room.
 - g ☐ Ruby was wearing her best dress when she died.
 - h ☐ Raymond Starr comes from Argentina.

6.2 What more did you learn?

Match the people to the descriptions.



C/J



R/K



E



R/S

Which of these people ...

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 has worked in France? | 6 is not in good health? |
| 2 is angry about a photo? | 7 worked as a dancer? |
| 3 has a lot of money? | 8 knows a lot about the Jefferson family? |
| 4 is a loyal servant? | |
| 5 wore a lot of make-up? | |

6.3

Language in use

Look at the sentence in the box. Then report the speech below in the same way.

She **told me** that her husband **spent** all Mr Jefferson's money.

- 1 'Conway Jefferson is very strong physically.' (Dr Metcalf / tell / Harper)

.....

.....

- 2 'Perhaps Ruby went to meet a boyfriend.' (Mark Gaskell / tell / Sir Henry)

.....

.....

- 3 'There's something wrong about Ruby's dress.' (Miss Marple / tell / Mrs Bantry)

.....

.....

- 4 'Raymond Starr's family used to be rich.' (Sir Henry / tell / Hugo McLean)

.....

.....

- 5 'There was a photo of a young man in Ruby Keene's bag.'
(Edwards / tell / Sir Henry)

.....

.....

6.4

What happens next?

- 1 Miss Marple is going to interview the Girl Guides about Pamela Reeves. What questions is she planning to ask them? Make a list in your notebook.
- 2 Look back at your answers to Activity 5.4. Have you changed your mind about the murderer? Finish the sentences in the box.

Who Murdered Ruby Keene?

I think the murderer is

I think the motive was

The Fellow from the Film Studios

'Why didn't I stop her?' Florence began to cry. 'A thing like that couldn't be true. Why didn't I tell someone? Oh, dear, I wish I was dead!'

In the police station at Danemouth, Superintendent Harper was interviewing five Girl Guides. They were friends of Pamela Reeves and they all told the same story. Pamela Reeves had been the same as usual. She had said nothing to any of them, except she was going shopping in Danemouth and would go home by a later bus.

A white-haired lady was sitting in the corner of Superintendent Harper's office. The girls didn't really notice her. Perhaps they thought that she too was a witness waiting to be questioned.

The girls left the room. Superintendent Harper turned to Miss Marple.

'I'd like to speak to Florence Small,' Miss Marple said.

Harper rang a bell and a police constable came into the room.

'Fetch Florence Small,' said Harper.

The constable went out and brought in a tall girl with fair hair and frightened brown eyes. She looked nervous.



Superintendent Harper looked at Miss Marple, who nodded.

'This lady will ask you some questions,' he said. He went out, closing the door behind him.

'Sit down, Florence,' said Miss Marple. 'You understand that it's very important we know what poor Pamela did on the day she died? And I'm sure you want to do your best to help? It is a serious crime to hide any information.

'I know that you are frightened. You are also afraid you may be blamed for not stopping Pamela at the time. But now you've got to be a brave girl and tell me everything. If you refuse to do that, it will be *very* serious. You can even be sent to prison.'

'I – I don't –'

'Now, Florence!' said Miss Marple sharply. 'Tell me all about it at once. Pamela wasn't going shopping, was she? Was it something to do with films?'

'Oh, *yes*!' said Florence in great surprise.

'I thought so,' said Miss Marple. 'Now I want all the details, please.'

'Oh! I've been so worried,' said Florence, speaking very quickly. 'I promised Pam that I would never tell anyone. And then when she was found all burned up in that car – oh! It was horrible. I felt it was all my fault because I didn't stop her.'

'What did Pam tell you?'

'She said she was going into Danemouth for a film test. She'd met a film producer a few days before – he'd just got back from Hollywood to work at the Lemville Studios. He was making a film about a schoolgirl and he was looking for a young actress. He thought Pamela would be just right. She's acted in plays at school and she's very good.

'But first she had to have a film test to see if she was suitable. So it was all arranged. Pamela had to go into Danemouth after the Guides meeting and meet him at his hotel. He'd take her to the film studios for testing. She would do the test and catch the bus home afterwards. He said that she should wait and talk to her parents about it when she knew the result of the test, since they might not be happy about it.

'Why didn't I stop her?' Florence began to cry. 'A thing like that couldn't be true. Why didn't I tell someone? Oh, dear, I wish I was *dead*!'

'It's all right,' said Miss Marple. 'No one will blame you. You've done the right thing by telling me.'



Five minutes later, Miss Marple was telling Florence's story to Superintendent Harper. He looked very serious.

'But how did you know that girl was lying?' he asked. 'All the girls looked very frightened. I couldn't see any difference between them.'

'I've had a lot of experience with girls telling lies,' said Miss Marple. 'I watched Florence as she went out of the door. I knew at once that she was hiding something. She began to relax too quickly. I had a maid like that. She told me that mice had eaten the rest of the cake and then began smiling as she left the room.'

'I'm very grateful to you,' said Harper. 'Lemville Studios, eh?' he said thoughtfully.

Miss Marple said nothing. She got up.

'I must go,' she said. 'I'm glad I could help you.'

'Are you going back to the hotel?'

'Yes - to pack my things. I must go back to St Mary Mead as soon as possible. There's a lot for me to do there.'



When she arrived in St Mary Mead, Miss Marple went straight to the Vicarage. The vicar's pretty young wife, Griselda, was at home, playing with her baby son.

'Are you collecting money for anything special at the moment?' asked Miss Marple after she had admired the child.

'Oh, yes, lots of different organisations,' said Griselda cheerfully. 'We always are.'

'I would like to go round the houses and collect some money for you,' said Miss Marple. 'Could you give me a little book to write down the amounts in? It will look more official.'

'You're planning something, aren't you?' said Griselda. 'Could you try and collect some money for our Sale of Work next Wednesday?'

'Certainly,' said Miss Marple.

'I suppose,' said Griselda, 'you don't want to tell me why you really want to do this?'

'Later, my dear,' said Miss Marple and hurried away.



Miss Marple walked quickly along the village street, carrying a small black book in her hand. She turned left at the crossroads and walked past the Blue Boar until she came to Basil Blake's house. She walked up to the front door and knocked.

The door was opened by the blonde young woman named Dinah Lee. She was less carefully made up than usual and in fact looked slightly dirty. She was wearing grey trousers and a green blouse.

'Good morning,' said Miss Marple. 'May I come in for a minute?'

She walked into the house as she spoke and sat down on a chair.

'Would you like to give some money for our Sale of Work?' asked Miss

Marple. She showed Dinah Lee her little black book. 'It's at the Vicarage next Wednesday.'

'Well – yes – perhaps a small amount.' The girl began to open her handbag.

'I see you've no hearthrug in front of the fire,' said Miss Marple.

Dinah Lee stared at her. Miss Marple was watching her carefully, but saw only slight annoyance.



'There used to be one,' she said. 'I don't know where it is now.' She held out a coin. 'What a strange old lady,' she thought.

'Oh, thank you, my dear.'

Miss Marple took the money and opened the little book.

'Er – what name shall I write down?' she asked.

Dinah's eyes grew suddenly hard.

'So that's why she's come here,' she thought. 'Well, it isn't her business. I'm going to shock her.'

'Miss Dinah Lee,' she said.

'This is Mr Basil Blake's cottage,' said Miss Marple.

'Yes, and I'm Miss Dinah Lee!'

'Will you allow me to give you some advice?' asked Miss Marple, looking hard at Dinah Lee. 'You may think it's rude of me, but I advise you, very strongly, not to continue using that name in the village.'

'What – what do you mean?' said Dinah, staring at her in surprise.

'People in country areas are shocked by unmarried couples living together,' said Miss Marple. 'I'm sure that it has amused you and your husband to shock

the people of St Mary Mead. That's why you pretended you weren't married. But in a very short time, you're going to need as much support and good feeling from the villagers here as you can get.'

'How did you know we are married?' asked Dinah Lee. 'You didn't go to Somerset House*, did you?'

'Somerset House? Oh, no,' replied Miss Marple. 'It was quite easy to *guess*. There is a lot of talk in a village, you know. The – er – kind of arguments you have are typical of the early days of marriage. Quite unlike unmarried couples. When there is no legal relationship, people are much more careful. Married people, I have noticed, enjoy their arguments and – er – the warmth that follows them.'

She paused, smiling kindly.

'Well, I – ' Dinah stopped and laughed. She sat down. 'You're wonderful!' she said. 'But why do you want us to tell everyone we're married?'

Miss Marple's face was serious now.

'Because,' she said, 'very soon, *your husband may be arrested for murder*.'

Dinah Lee stared at Miss Marple for some moments.

'Basil? Murder? Are you joking?' she asked in a shocked voice.

'No. Haven't you read the papers?'

'You mean – that girl at the Majestic Hotel? Do you mean they suspect Basil of killing her?'

'Yes.'

'But it's not true.'

There was the noise of a car outside, and the gate opened. Then Basil Blake came in, carrying some bottles. He saw Miss Marple and stopped in surprise.

'She says you're going to be arrested for the murder of that girl, Ruby Keene,' said Dinah breathlessly.

'Oh, God!' said Basil Blake. The bottles dropped from his arms on to the sofa. He fell into a chair and covered his face with his hands. 'Oh, my God!'

Dinah hurried to him and put her arms around him.

'Basil, look at me!' she said. 'It isn't true! I know it isn't true! I don't believe it for a moment! But why do they think – You didn't even *know* her, did you?'

'Oh yes, he knew her,' said Miss Marple.

'Be quiet, you old woman,' said Basil angrily. 'Listen, Dinah, I didn't know her very well. I just saw her once or twice at the Majestic. That's all, I promise.'

'I don't understand,' said Dinah. 'Why would anyone suspect you, then?'

Basil covered his eyes.

* Somerset House: a place in London where records of marriages were kept at that time

arrest /ə'rest/ (v) to take someone away to a police station because they are thought to be a criminal

‘What did you do with the hearthrug?’ Miss Marple asked.

‘I put it outside in the **dustbin**,’ replied Basil.

‘That was very stupid – very stupid,’ said Miss Marple. ‘People don’t put good hearthrugs in dustbins.’

‘But what are you both talking about?’ cried Dinah.

‘Ask her. She seems to know all about it,’ said Basil.

‘I’ll tell you what I think happened if you want,’ said Miss Marple. ‘I think you had an argument with your wife at a party. You had, perhaps, too much to drink and you drove down here. I don’t know what time you arrived –’

‘At about two in the morning,’ said Basil Blake. ‘The place was all dark. I opened the door and turned on the light and I saw – and I saw –’

He stopped and Miss Marple continued.

‘You saw a girl lying on the hearthrug – a girl in a white evening dress – strangled. I don’t know if you recognised her then –’

Basil shook his head.

‘I couldn’t look at her – her face was all blue. She’d been dead some time and she was *there* – in *my* room!’

‘You were nervous and frightened,’ Miss Marple said gently. ‘You weren’t thinking in a normal way. You didn’t know what to do –’

‘I thought Dinah might arrive at any moment. And she’d find me there with a dead body – a girl’s dead body – and she’d think I had killed her. Then I had an idea. I thought, “I’ll put her in old Bantry’s library. He thinks I’m a useless young fool. He’ll look a fool when a lovely dead girl is found on his hearthrug.” I was a bit drunk at the time and I thought it would be amusing. Old Bantry with a dead blonde. So I covered her with the hearthrug and took her up to Gossington Hall. I came back and threw the hearthrug in the dustbin.’

‘But in the morning I realised I’d done a very stupid thing. And then the police came here – the Chief Constable. I was frightened of him, so I was rude to him. And then Dinah arrived.’

‘There’s a car driving up now,’ said Dinah, looking out of the window. ‘There are men in it.’

‘The police, I think,’ said Miss Marple.

Basil Blake stood up. Suddenly he became quite calm. He even smiled.

‘Go to Mother, Dinah,’ he said. ‘Tell her everything about our marriage. And don’t worry. *I didn’t do it*. So it will be all right, love.’

Basil nodded.

‘Goodbye, Dinah,’ he said.

dustbin /ˈdʌstbɪn/ (n) a large container, kept outside your house, that holds waste until the waste is collected



There was a knock on the door. Inspector Slack came in with another man. 'Mr Basil Blake?' said Slack. 'I've come to arrest you for the murder of Ruby Keene on the night of September 21. You will please come with me now.'

'Very calm,' the Inspector thought, then turned and greeted Miss Marple.

'And she's here too. It's a good thing we found the hearthrug. And we found out from the car-park man at the studio that he left the party at *eleven*, not midnight. So first he murdered the Reeves girl and drove her body out to the quarry. Then he walked back into Danemouth, brought Ruby Keene here, strangled her and put her in old Bantry's library. He's mad – sex and violence. Well, *this* girl's lucky to escape.'

After the police had taken Basil Blake away, Dinah turned to Miss Marple.

'I don't know who you are, but you've got to understand this – *Basil didn't do it*,' she said.

'I know he didn't,' said Miss Marple. 'I know who *did* do it. But it's not going to be easy to prove. Something you said – just now – may help. It gave me an idea – about the connection I'd been trying to find. What *was* it?'

Miss Marple Explains Everything

The light came on. From his pillows Conway Jefferson looked up at the murderer of Ruby Keene.

Mrs Bantry put down the telephone, feeling a little annoyed. She had called Miss Marple twice at her cottage, but there was no answer. Then she had called a number of other people in the village. None of them had seen Miss Marple.

'Where *can* she be?' Mrs Bantry asked herself impatiently.

There was a quiet cough behind her. It was the butler.

'Excuse me, madam,' he said. 'Miss Marple is coming towards the house.'

Mrs Bantry rushed to the front door and greeted Miss Marple breathlessly.

'I've been trying to find you *everywhere*. Where have you been?'

Colonel Bantry came out of his study.

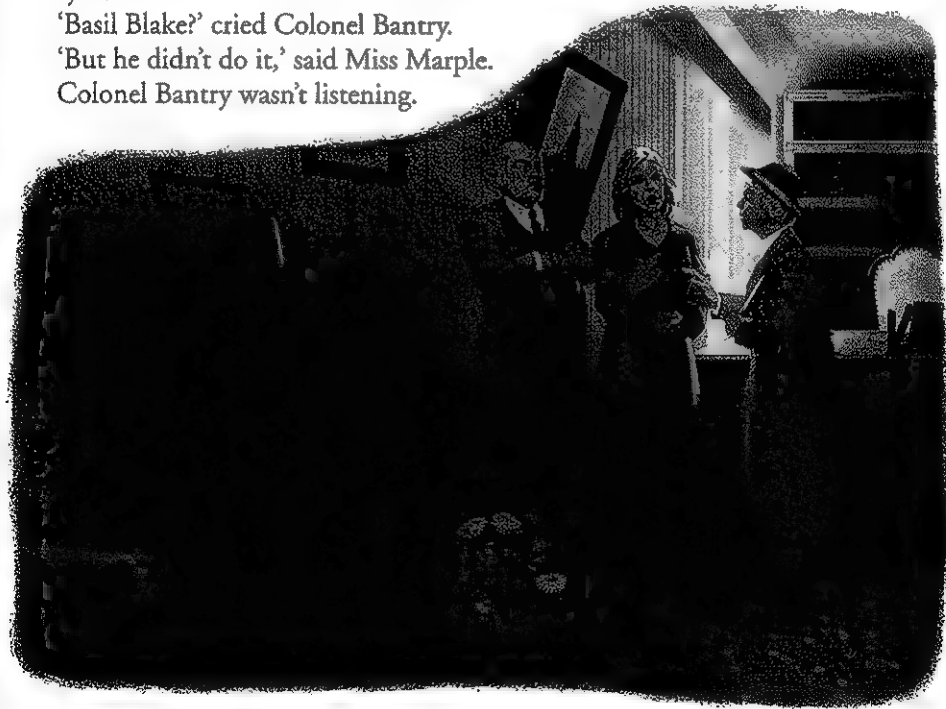
'Ah, Miss Marple. Good morning. I'm glad you've come.'

'I thought I'd better bring you the news,' said Miss Marple, as she followed Mrs Bantry into the study. 'Basil Blake has just been arrested for the murder of Ruby Keene.'

'Basil Blake?' cried Colonel Bantry.

'But he didn't do it,' said Miss Marple.

Colonel Bantry wasn't listening.



'Do you mean he strangled that girl and then brought her along and put her in *my* library?'

'He put her in your library,' replied Miss Marple. 'But he didn't kill her. He found her dead in his cottage.'

'I don't believe it,' said Colonel Bantry. 'If you find a body, you ring the police – if you're an honest man.'

'Ah,' said Miss Marple, 'but not everyone's character is as strong as yours, Colonel Bantry. But I've heard a lot about Basil Blake. When he was only eighteen, he went into a burning house and saved four children. He brought them out, one after the other. Then he went back for a dog, although the building wasn't safe. It fell on him and he was badly hurt. He couldn't walk for nearly a year and was ill for a long time after that.'

'Oh!' The Colonel coughed. 'I – er – never knew that.'

'He doesn't talk about it,' said Miss Marple.

'But why was he trying to blame *me* for the murder?' asked Colonel Bantry.

'He thought of it as – as a kind of joke,' said Miss Marple. 'You see, he was rather drunk at the time.'

'Was he?' said Colonel Bantry, more warmly. 'So *you* don't think he's the murderer?'

'I'm sure he isn't.'

'And you think you know who did?'

Miss Marple nodded.

'Isn't she wonderful?' said Mrs Bantry, but nobody was listening to her.

'Well, who was it?' her husband asked.

'I was going to ask you to help me,' said Miss Marple. 'I want you to come with me to Somerset House.'



First, Miss Marple went to see Sir Henry Clithering and explained her plan to him.

'I don't like it,' he said very seriously.

'But we have to be *sure*,' said Miss Marple. 'If Mr Jefferson agrees –'

'All right,' said Sir Henry. 'Shall I tell Harper?'

'Don't tell him too much,' said Miss Marple. 'It might be difficult for him. But ask him to watch one or two people – and follow them.'



'My friend, Conway Jefferson, is going to Danemouth tomorrow,' Sir Henry told Superintendent Harper later. 'He's planning to make a new will.'

'Is Mr Jefferson going to tell his son-in-law and daughter-in-law about that?' asked Harper.

‘He intends to tell them about it this evening.’

‘I see,’ said the Superintendent. ‘So you’re not satisfied with the arrest of Basil Blake?’ he asked. ‘What about Miss Marple? Is she?’

The two men looked at each other.

‘All right,’ said Harper. ‘I’ll tell my men what to do.’

‘There’s one more thing,’ said Sir Henry. ‘You’d better see this.’

He pushed a piece of paper across the table to Harper. Harper looked at it in surprise.

‘This changes everything,’ he said. ‘How do you know it’s true?’

‘Women,’ replied Sir Henry, ‘are very interested in marriages.’

‘Especially older single women,’ said Harper.

◆
Conway Jefferson looked up and smiled as Sir Henry entered his room.

‘Well, I’ve told them,’ he said. ‘They didn’t seem very upset.’

‘What did you say?’

‘I told them that Ruby was dead but I still wanted to remember her. So I’m planning to make a new will and leave my money to a home for young professional dancers in London. I’m surprised they believed me. I’d never do that!’

‘You know, I made a fool of myself over Ruby,’ he added. ‘I must be turning into a silly old man. She was a pretty child, but she wasn’t Rosamund. She looked like her, but she didn’t have the same heart or mind.’

Sir Henry went downstairs and spoke to one of the hotel doormen.

‘Mr Gaskell, sir? He’s just gone off in his car. He had to go to London.’

‘Oh, I see,’ said Sir Henry. ‘Is Mrs Jefferson here?’

‘Mrs Jefferson has just gone up to bed, sir.’

Sir Henry looked into the sitting-room and through that to the dance room. Hugo McLean was reading a newspaper in the sitting-room. Josie was dancing with a very large man and Raymond was dancing beautifully with a pale, unattractive young girl.

Sir Henry went upstairs.

◆
It was three o’clock. There was no wind and the moon was shining over the quiet sea. In Conway Jefferson’s room there was no sound except his own heavy breathing as he lay on his pillows.

The curtains at the window moved and a figure came into the room. Everything was quiet again, but now there was someone else inside the room.

The person moved softly towards the bed. The deep breathing on the pillow did not change.

The person reached out towards Conway Jefferson's arm. In one hand was a sharp needle.

And then, suddenly, a hand came out of the shadows by the bed and closed over the hand that held the needle.

The unemotional voice of a policeman said, 'Give me that needle!'



The light came on. From his pillows Conway Jefferson looked up at the murderer of Ruby Keene.

♦
'I want to know how you solved the case, Miss Marple,' said Sir Henry later.

Miss Marple turned red and smiled.

'Well,' she said, 'I noticed immediately that the dead girl was quite young and that she bit her nails. I looked down at her and felt very sorry, because it is always sad to see that a young life has ended. Of course, it was very confusing that the body was found in Colonel Bantry's library. That wasn't *meant* to happen. The murderer's plan was to put the body in young Basil Blake's cottage, but the plan went wrong and the *real* murderer was probably very annoyed.'

'You know that I suspect everyone, but I do know a lot about human nature. So at once I thought about the *money*. Two people would make money from this girl's death – and fifty thousand pounds is a lot of money, especially when you are in financial difficulties. Of course they both seemed very nice people. Mrs

Jefferson, for example – everyone liked her. But her feelings had changed this summer. She didn't want her father-in-law to control her life any more. And she loved her son so much.

'Mr Mark Gaskell, of course, was a more likely possibility. But for certain reasons I was sure that a *woman* had something to do with the crime.

'Both Mr Gaskell and Mrs Jefferson had alibis for the time when Ruby Keene was killed. But soon afterwards there came the discovery of the burnt-out car with Pamela Reeves's body in it. So the alibis were useless.

'I couldn't find the connection between the two crimes. I knew that one person was a part of it, but I couldn't see their motive. Then Dinah Lee said something interesting. Somerset House! Marriage! If Mark Gaskell or Adelaide Jefferson were married, then their husband or wife would also be interested in Conway Jefferson's money.

'Raymond Starr, for example, had shown great interest in Mrs Jefferson. He might think he had a good chance of marrying her. And there was also Mr McLean. He wasn't rich – and he was staying not far from Danemouth on the night of the murder. So it seemed, didn't it,' said Miss Marple, 'that *anyone* might be the murderer?

'But, of course, really, I *knew*. There were the girl's bitten nails.'

'Nails?' said Sir Henry. 'But she broke one of her nails and cut the others.'

'No,' said Miss Marple. 'There is a big difference between bitten nails and cut nails. The body in Colonel Bantry's library had bitten nails. And that could mean only one thing. *It wasn't Ruby Keene at all.*

'And that brings us straight to Josie. *Josie* told the police it was Ruby Keene's body – but she knew that it wasn't. She was very surprised when she learnt where the body had been found. Why? Because *she* knew that the body had been put into Basil Blake's cottage. Who tried to make us suspect Basil? Josie, by saying to Raymond that perhaps Ruby was with the film fellow. And before that, by putting his photo into Ruby's bag.

'Josie couldn't hide her anger with the dead girl. Josie was clever, practical and with no feelings for Ruby. She was only interested in money.

'Motive was the problem, but when Dinah Lee talked about Somerset House, I understood the connection. Marriage! If Josie and Mark Gaskell were married – then everything was clear. As we now know, Josie and Mark were married a year ago. They were keeping it a secret until after Mr Jefferson died.

'Mark and Josie didn't want Ruby to get Mr Jefferson's money, so they made a plan to murder her – quite a complicated plan. They chose another girl, poor Pamela Reeves. Mark met her and made up a story about a film test. Pamela came to the hotel and introduced her to Josie – a make-up artist! That poor

child, it makes me sick to think of it! She sat in Josie's bathroom while Josie coloured her hair and put make-up on her. Then they drugged her.

'After dinner Mark Gaskell went out in his car. He took Pamela's body to Basil Blake's cottage, dressed in one of Ruby's old dresses. She was still sleeping, not dead, when they got to the cottage. He strangled her on the hearthrug, then drove quickly back to the Majestic Hotel. It was just after ten o'clock. Ruby Keene, *still alive*, was dancing with Raymond Starr.

'Josie had probably told Ruby to go upstairs and change, then wait in Josie's room. She too was drugged, probably in her coffee after dinner. Josie came up later "to look for her". Josie killed Ruby – perhaps she hit her on the head. Then she went downstairs and danced with Raymond.

'Very early the next morning, she dressed the girl in Pamela's clothes and carried the body down the side stairs – Josie was a strong young woman. She fetched George Bartlett's car, drove to the quarry, poured petrol over the car and burned it. Then she walked back to the hotel and arrived at about eight or nine o'clock, pretending to be anxious about Ruby!'

'It's a very complicated plan,' said Colonel Melchett.

'Yes,' said Miss Marple, 'but I had to be *sure* that I was right. So when Mark and Josie learned that Mr Jefferson was going to make a new will, they knew they *had* to do something. They had already murdered *two* people for the money. So they would find it quite easy to murder a third person.

'Mark needed an alibi, so he went to London and had dinner with friends in a restaurant there. Josie stayed at the hotel. She planned to give Mr Jefferson a drug that would shock his heart. A doctor would not be surprised if Mr Jefferson died from heart trouble. There were some loose stones outside Mr Jefferson's room, and Josie was going to throw one down afterwards. People would think that Mr Jefferson died from the shock of the noise.'

'Very clever,' said Melchett.

'So the third death you spoke of was going to be Conway Jefferson's?' Sir Henry asked.

Miss Marple shook her head.

'Oh no – I meant Basil Blake. They wanted him to be found guilty of murder. If that happened, he would be killed.'

'I never liked Mark Gaskell,' said Conway Jefferson. 'But my daughter Rosamund was in love with him. In love with a murderer! Well, I'm glad that he's been caught as well as the woman. They'll both die now.'

'Josie was always the strong character,' said Miss Marple. 'It was her plan. She brought Ruby down here, but she never thought that Mr Jefferson would become fond of Ruby and spoil Josie's chance of becoming rich.'

‘Poor girl. Poor little Ruby,’ said Jefferson.

Adelaide Jefferson and Hugo McLean came in. Adelaide was looking very beautiful. She came up to Conway Jefferson and put her hand on his shoulder.

‘I want to tell you something, Jeff. I’m going to marry Hugo.’

Mr Jefferson looked up at her.

‘Congratulations to you both,’ he said. ‘Oh ... and I’m making a new will tomorrow. I’m settling ten thousand pounds on you. The rest of my money will go to Peter when I die.’

‘Oh, *Jeff*!’ Adelaide said tearfully. ‘You’re *wonderful*!’

‘Peter’s a nice boy. I’d like to see more of him – before I die. He’s got a great feeling for crime!’



As Hugo and Adelaide passed the dance room, Raymond came up to them.

‘I must tell you my news,’ said Adelaide quickly. ‘We’re going to be married.’

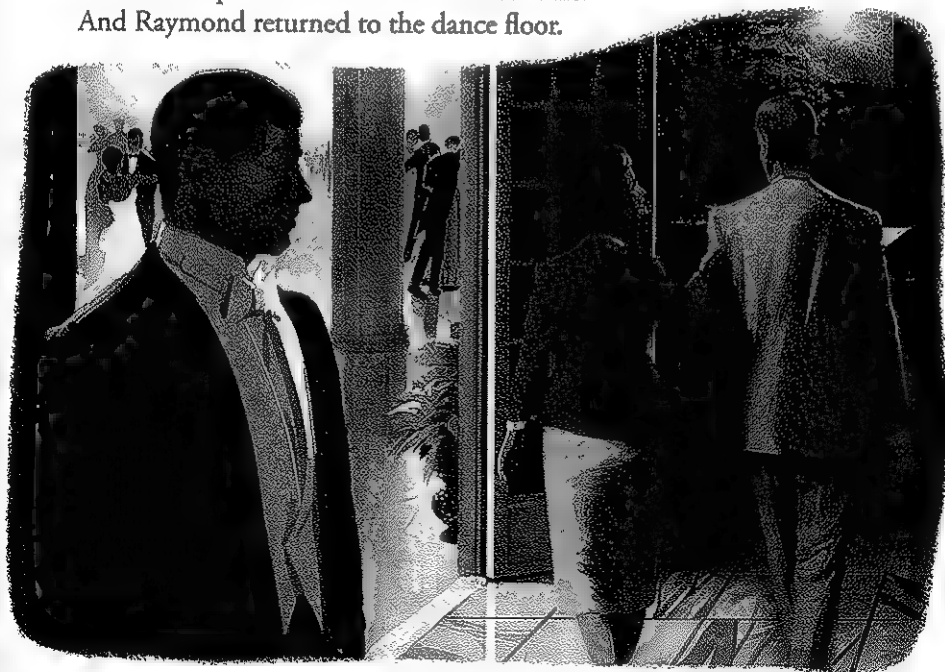
The smile on Raymond’s face didn’t change.

‘I hope,’ he said, looking into her eyes, ‘that you will be very, very happy ...’

They continued walking and Raymond stood looking after them.

‘A nice woman,’ he said to himself. ‘A very nice woman. And she was going to be rich too. I took a lot of trouble finding out about the Devonshire Starr family ... Oh well. Perhaps I’ll have better luck next time.’

And Raymond returned to the dance floor.



1 Work with two or three other students.

Choose one of the names from the list on the left below. Then ask each of the other students to choose a name from the list on the right. Interview each person and ask questions about what they were doing on the night of Ruby Keene's death.

Where were you on the night of the murder?



When did you last see Ruby Keene?

Detectives	Suspects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonel Melchett • Superintendent Harper • Sir Henry Clithering • Miss Marple • Inspector Slack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonel Bantry • Adelaide Jefferson • Raymond Starr • Hugo McLean • Mark Gaskell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basil Blake • George Bartlett • Josie Turner • Conway Jefferson • Edwards

2 Work with another student.

Choose a character from the pictures below. Imagine that it is one year after the story finishes. What is your character doing now? Make notes and then compare them with your partner's. Whose ideas are better?



- a Does he/she live in the same place? Why (not)?
- b How has his/her lifestyle changed?
- c Has he/she made any new friends?
- d Is he/she happy? Why (not)?

Miss Marple has a young nephew, Raymond, who is a writer of fiction. She writes a letter to him about Ruby Keene's murder and the events that happened afterwards.

Make notes under these headings, then write the letter.

• The discovery of the body

• The main suspects

• The second murder

• The discovery of the murderer

St Mary Mead
October 5th

Dear Raymond,

We have had great excitement in St Mary Mead. A body was found in the library in Gossington Hall, which belongs to my friends Colonel and Dolly Bantry.

The main suspects were

The next day, another body was discovered.

The murderer was found when

I do hope you will come and visit me soon.

Love from Aunt Jane

- 1 Read the following magazine report. Discuss whether you would enjoy an event like this, and why.

THE MURDER BUSINESS

Murder has become big business! There are companies which organise murder mystery evenings. These evenings are very popular. They take place in hotels, restaurants or even sometimes people's homes. The company sends professional actors who perform a play about a murder. While the guests are eating dinner, they watch the different acts of the play and discuss the murder. The actors come to the guests' tables but stay 'in character'. The guests can ask the actors

questions and, at the end of the meal, they have to guess who the murderer was.

Jemma White recently celebrated her 21st birthday. 'I wanted a party that was a bit unusual and would bring all my friends together,' she said. So her parents contacted a murder mystery company. The actors came to Jemma's home and performed a murder play in front of Jemma's 30 guests.

'Turning our home into a theatre for the evening was a wonderful experience,' said Jemma. 'My guests had a great time. They were still talking about the murder for days afterwards!'

- 2 Work with another student and have this conversation. You are the General Manager and the Assistant Manager of a local hotel, and you want to arrange a murder mystery evening for your guests.

Discuss the list (below) of different productions organised by 'Top Murder Mysteries' and decide which one you would like for your party, and why.

- Murder on the Dance Floor
- Death on the Tennis Court
- Murder in the Old Castle
- Death at the Village Flower Show
- Murder at Sea
- Death in the Theatre
- A Royal Murder
- A Scottish Murder



- 3 You are given this information when you phone the company. What questions did you ask?

a About three hours.

c £1,100.

b At least seven.

d Any number up to 100.

e Around tables of between 6 and 10 people.

f Theatrical lighting, professional actors, paper and pens for the guests.

g The guests watch the murder as the different courses of the meal are served.

- 4 Work in pairs. One of you is the General Manager of the hotel. Show the Restaurant Manager the programme for the murder mystery evening.

Discuss the menu with him/her and write down what the guests will eat.

Murder on the Menu

Guests are given background information about the murder.

First course

Guests watch events leading to the murder. Then they see the murder.

Second course

The actors come to the table in their characters. The guests ask them questions.

Third course

The guests can interview the actors again.

Coffee

The guests are given answer forms and, with others on their table, complete them with the name and motive of the murderer. Finally, the actors return and name the murderer. The first table with the correct answers receives a prize.

5 Use the information from the activities on the last two pages.

Write an advertisement for the murder mystery evening at the Palace Hotel for your local newspaper. Include information about

- the date
- the production
- the programme of events for the evening
- the menu
- the cost (£65 for each person)

MURDER MYSTERY

Evening at the Palace Hotel

Become a detective for the evening and solve a murder!

